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Journey into paradox : re-searching unconscious in teacher identity using creative narrative

Journey into paradox: re-searching unconscious in teacher identity using creative narrative

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to be an intellectual and personal exploration of the role of unconscious in teachers' identities. The task is replete with conundrums and paradoxes which I address, the most central being how to research unconscious, which, by definition, remains inaccessible and, therefore, can only be deduced indirectly. Taking the 'narrative turn' on the journey also challenges my pre-conceptualisations of unconscious within 'grand narratives' of psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology, forcing me into a 'place from nowhere,' from which I explore debates concerning consciousness and its relationship to unconscious and identity, differing approaches to identity, teacher identity and the role of language in narrative. I become concerned to create an argument for the power of symbolization to by-pass language and access fundamental substrates of personal experience, emotion and memory upon which identity, in turn, is constructed, aided by language.

I engage in both autoethnographic reflection and a heuristic, narrative inquiry with four female teachers using a creative narrative approach, comprising arts-based methods - autobiographical time-lines, masks, self-system pictures and self-boxes. The power of image and metaphor is evident in the teachers' deeply layered accounts, which identify critical emotional incidents, defences, compromised sexuality, possible selves and serendipity as nuclei around which they story unconscious in their identities. The images and research conversations suggest that many aspects within teachers' lives are invisible, below the level of awareness but, nevertheless, remain operative.

Such a dynamic relationship between the personal and professional is not reflected in current debates on teacher identity. Arising from the methodology termed 'creative narrative,' I argue that narrative research would benefit from de-privileging consciously narrated experience and encompassing a wider repertoire of arts-based methodologies. The final irony is that my personal, reflexive account, which leads me to unearth the underground of my own professional identity, finds voice in words.

Acknowledgements

It has been a long, arduous and passionate paradoxical journey. At times, I felt I couldn't have made it much more difficult for myself. Without the support and belief of many people I would not have finished this final stage. Meeting Kim, my supervisor, has to be one of the most fortuitous treasures along the way. She challenged me just by being Kim and I have learnt so much from her even in a short time. Along the way, I lived with my lovely teachers, Fionnuala, Kathy, Daisy and Tricia (and the others) who gave so much of themselves to me through their stories. Without their trust, it would not have been possible. Beyond the pseudonyms, they know who they are and I will always feel a special connection to them. There are so many others that have loved me along the path and I wish I could acknowledge you all. Not least is Robin who always believes in me and picks me up when down and Jamie who passed a year of his young life seeing me in my study. Then there's Steph, my special friend, and ally in 'spoon-drawerism', Angela who proof-read and John who pragmatically insisted the dissertation was simply a task to be done. Good idea but simply not me!

Thank-you all for your support.

I tried to find a voice

I tried to find my voice, a voice lost
In a night thickened by paranoia,
In a night crowded out by doubts
It could not articulate
I had let go of it through negligence,
As at a carnival one lets go a child's hand.

I rummaged through a jumble sale of bodies
Listened to advice devoid of meaning;
My voice was like a moth, its few colours
Worn to exhaustion.
It was drunk and lost, it was battered
And flung everywhere.

I had arranged my life around that voice.
Absurdly relied on it to explain
Who and what I was, as if either mattered.
In strange towns I used it to advantage
Whatever it could fish out from the night
I accepted.

Brian Patten. (abridged)

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: Ruth Lilly

Date: November 2003

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AERA	American Educational Research Association
BACP	British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
CEST	Cognitive-Experiential Self System (after Epstein, 1994)
DCA I&II	Data Collection and Analysis: Two compulsory research modules on the EdD programme, University of Bristol
ELB	Education and Library Board. In Northern Ireland, there are five ELBs, loosely equivalent to LEAs in England
HOT	Higher Order Theorists
PQH(NI)	Professional Qualification for Headteachers (Northern Ireland)
TAT	Thematic Apperception Test

INTRODUCTION: JOURNEY INTO PARADOX: RE-SEARCHING UNCONSCIOUS IN TEACHER IDENTITY USING CREATIVE NARRATIVE.

> 'We know what we know because of how we are positioned. If we shift our position in the parade, our knowing shifts.'
>
> (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 17 after Geertz)

This dissertation is an intellectual and personal exploration of the role of unconscious in the identities of teachers. What started out as being a study aimed at synthesizing literature from psychology and counselling theory and research and bringing this to bear on questions relating to teachers' identities has led to an eventual awareness of an underlying personal (unconscious) pursuit. This is the desire to understand, in addition to the dynamics involved in teachers' identities through their narratives, the development of my own personal and professional identity as a teacher educator over time, and the ways in which within my own story I perceive unconscious dimensions to have interacted. Thus, in setting out to study the conscious and unconscious dimensions to teachers' lives, I have been, in effect, unawarely, wanting to find the voice of my experience and, in so doing, bring together the disparate parts of my own knowledge, experience and unanswered questions arising from working, variously, as a clinical psychologist, educational psychology lecturer, counsellor trainer and researcher, all contained within the role of a university lecturer in teacher education. The immediacy of some of these underlying themes is evident in the autoethnographic account.

There is relatively little in the way of literature which explores the potential relationship between the personal and professional development of teachers. Writing that does exist tends to lie in the area of teachers' careers and identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1996) and, in more recent years, there has been a foray into the emotional dimension of teachers' lives (Noddings, 1996; Nias, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998; 2001) and the interaction between personal biography and professional and social contexts.

The study explores the potential for the modern narrated experience of an 'objectified self' or 'identity' which exists at the expense of deeper and more unified subjective experience – subjective experience, much of which the narrator may not be aware or only partially aware but which is viewed by them as having meaning only

when stimulated by means that short-circuit articulation of experience through language.

Under this research title, this study is full of paradoxes and the story of the research process has been one that has involved confronting a variety of riddles in a self-created quest that has provided both endless fascination and, at points, despair without apparent resolution. In the face of the assorted contradictions, progress towards completion resulted in occasional periods of 'flow' experience (Csikszlmenthalyi, 1992) followed more frequently by frozen stretches of 'cognitive confusion' (Finke & Bettle, 1996) where all rational thought was rendered incapacitated, characterized by methodological and epistemological turmoil. At these points, what seemed to eventuate was what I can only describe as serendipity. Accidentally and by coincidence, I would happen upon a quote, or metaphor, or piece of thinking or unrelated conversation or image that was 'just right' to tip my awareness into a better state of knowing. Evidence of serendipity or such kinds of tacit knowing, whilst reassuring, was rarely orderly nor could be guaranteed to turn up before the current contradiction had set in 'mental concrete'. One of the biggest breakthroughs, however, was coming across Witherell's (1991: 83-96) writing on the self in narrative, where she described it as a paradoxical journey. Borrowing from her metaphor, the title of this thesis was born, with some degree of relief. At least within this framework, i.e. journey into paradox, the conundrum was being externalized rather than embedded within the text. My decision was, therefore, to confront the apparent paradoxes, and, in so doing, aim to minimize confusion to the reader, even if I could not always provide solutions or even ensure clarity in the final analysis.

During the process, I returned time and again at points of greatest bafflement to basic dictionary definitions of paradox for reassurance - that it was OK to be confused since paradox was now the declared essence of my thesis:

Paradox – 'statement contrary to received opinion: person or thing conflicting with pre-conceived notions of what is reasonable or possible.' (Concise Oxford Dictionary).

Paradox – 'seemingly absurd or self-contradictory though often true statement.' (Oxford English Dictionary).

Paradox One: 'Journey into paradox': Fizzing mists and swampy lowlands!

Using the metaphor of 'journey' seemed to fit my experience of the research process involved in this study. The research journey has been an exploration of a knowledge landscape for which, as I set out, I thought I held a reasonable map and a back-pack of essential orienteering instruments of constructs and methodologies, having been an academic (and erstwhile practitioner) in psychology, counselling and education for over twenty years. Initially, as a fairly seasoned, experienced traveller, I thought I 'knew' the geography of the terrain reasonably well and was anticipating travel through recognizable parts with well-trodden paths, to others I had not visited for a while that would be vague in memory, and then, onwards, to new terrains as yet to be explored. Thus, originally, I set out with a plan to undertake a more traditional, interpretive piece on the role of the unconscious in teachers' professional identities. While this is a closely bordering country, it is certainly not the same as the one I ultimately explored. In taking 'the narrative turn' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), with its paths through a postmodern, constructivist paradigm, the journey from conceptualization through to research text certainly proved to be anything but straight, nor one I could have predicted. Given my 'anarchic streak', of course, I would have never expected to take a straight, sure-footed route from A to B through any research study and, in any case, setting out with a quest to study any dimension of unconscious life was, by its very nature, likely to cast doubts on the feasibility of the study, however comprehensive the original map. I had always been intrigued by the apparent power in the symbolization of seemingly unconscious material to lead to an increased sense of personal and social agency in the clients and professionals with whom I worked. I was therefore curious about how to explore and somehow demonstrate the effects of unconscious in people's lives within the educational research world. This was never going to be a straightforward study but, in its original mapping (see assignment for EdD modules: DCA I & II), was within a bounded territory, a territory in which I had few doubts about my role as the grand

designer-cartographer and interpreter of what I found on my research exploration. However, having taken the narrative turn, I stumbled very early on in my research path upon unexpected intellectual challenges for which I was largely ill-prepared and with which I am still grappling to orientate myself in the 'fizzing mist' (Connor, 2003: 17) and 'swampy lowlands ... of confusing messes' (Schön, 1983: 42). The challenges which have led to shifting planes of thought, sometimes without borders and, often without grounding, have been postmodernism and narrative theory. Certain axioms of these, both independently and where they interrelate, found ways to confuse my sense of direction and, in instances, left me without footholds. From my early forays into the respective and related literatures, I certainly embraced both postmodernism and narrative theory as contemporary intellectual landmarks which held attraction for what they offered in terms of endorsing many values, characteristics and directions that I aspire to because of my own personal and social biography.

Nevertheless, as I got further into the task of trying to plot my way through an understanding of 'unconscious' from the worlds of cognitive psychology and psychodynamic theory to narrative theory with its links to postmodernism, I became severely disorientated at times. The mental mists drifted in variously with the deconstruction of 'the unconscious' as the outdated stuff of romantic modernism (Taylor, 1989), with narrative inquiry's privileging (over-reliance in my view) of language (Kerby, 1991; Crossley, 2000), the derision in which any 'turn inward' seemed to be held in modern conceptualizations of self or identity (Spence, 1982; Taylor, 1989; Rorty, 1989), the seemingly exclusive emphasis placed in postmodern analysis on 'the personal as the social and political' (Atkinson, 2002) and the stumble that I had when, despite my oft-declared rejection of fixed notions of reality and knowledge, the mainstays finally broke on cherished Freudian and Jungian theories and they floated off to the horizon as just two more 'grand narratives' (Kellner, 1988).

But perhaps the biggest stumbling-block of all was the dawning realization that I could not leave my self out of the work, 'I' was part of the story. In undertaking a narrative approach, there was an onus on me to locate myself on the knowledge landscape (Bruner, 1986, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and in the quest to uncover my motivation for the study of the unconscious came to the realization that, despite

my genuinely declared interest in teachers' identities, I was in actuality, although unawarely, 'in search of self', trying at this stage in my career to piece together various facets and make sense of the unknown in my own professional identity, my own narrative. Thus the journey became more multi-dimensional, with my personal narrative of inquiry interlapping with the personal narratives of the participants – and in these spaces, much of what I had packed for the journey seemed of little use at times. Questions of figure-ground, format, voice, interpretation, academic expectations were persistent concerns throughout the journey and are still in the process of being resolved. The research for this dissertation has been and will continue to be a journey rather than a destination although there has been a sense of 'coming home' as I am guided by my heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) or intuitive (Fensham & Martin, 1992) research sense and with the various pieces (of the research study and my professional life experience) gradually finding their place in this re-authored knowledge landscape.

Paradox Two: Re-search puzzlement: locating the unconscious.

> 'Narrative inquiries are always composed around a particular wonder, a research puzzle.'
>
> (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 124).

The 'research puzzle' in this case is how and in what way to conceptualize the unconscious or even any unconscious processes in order to 'research' them because by their very definition, they are inaccessible. As will be seen in chapter 2, there is nothing clearly definable or indeed operational about the concept of 'unconscious', within whatever epistemological framework the term is being used. Thus, even within the more formalistic traditions, studying the unconscious is considered to be by no means a straightforward process since:

> '...the unconscious seems even more impenetrable than that of consciousness: not only is it (like consciousness) not publicly observable, but it is, in addition, not even privately observable. There can be no direct assault upon it. The unconscious may only be deduced from indirect evidence.'
>
> (Erdelyi, 1994: 200).

In this case the challenge was not to research the unconscious in the traditional methodological sense with the problems associated with prototypical problem

definition and evidence-gathering stages but to explore it within the narrative genre. From the outset, the 'narrative turn' required a conceptual reformulation of unconscious and the nature of the inquiry, where 'inquiry' would carry more of a searching quality – thus the term 're-search', a searching again (after Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 124) was adopted:

> 're-search...searching again, anew, back, going about again or going around again. The circling around again and again provides a fine metaphor for the research enterprise.'
>
> (Braud & Anderson, 1998: 25).

Nevertheless, even with the intention of looking anew at the unconscious through a narrative lens, I could locate only a few constructive references in the research literature to guide me on how to conceptualize or re-search the unconscious. In effect what I was finding was all but a derisory dismissal of any attempt to call on an extant 'unconscious' or even individual 'unconscious processes' in attempting to understand identity through narrative inquiry.

Although the narrative tradition of psychotherapy and case work can be traced back to Freud (Josselson, 1995), critics such as Spence (1982) appear to have all but ousted research on subjective or internal processes in self and identity. Notions of a dynamic unconscious in the narrative process is most obviously evident in McAdam's (1985, 1997) work on 'imagoes' and personal myths and which also finds some resonance in Crossley's (2002) earlier approach within narrative psychology (Davies,1995). Whilst there is a small but emerging literature on the 'narrative unconscious' (Freeman, 2002; Mancuso, 2002; Morgan, 2002; Raskin, 2002) this recent debate has been focusing on the location of the unconscious in culture as opposed to the individual in the more Freudian sense and with autobiography as the only method being referred to for uncovering this collective unconscious.

Thus, since narrative theory was decidedly unsupportive of any dynamic or psychodynamic view of an unconscious, subjectively located, I went back to my cognitive psychology roots to see if I could 'break the shell' and explore the potential in this narrative inquiry for a more integrative view of the cognitive unconscious, affective unconscious of clinical and cognitive psychology (Westen, 1998) and the personal and collective views of unconscious within the psychodynamic fields. With this in mind, I dropped the definite article from 'the unconscious' which seemed to

relate too closely to 'the Freudian unconscious' and instead referred to my quest as 're-searching unconscious in teacher identity', thereby opening up the possibilities for a wider search of the role that unconscious processes might play in narratives of identity.

> 'Narrative research is a process that embraces paradox and cannot, therefore, be defined in linear terms.'
>
> (Josselson, 1989: xi).

Paradox Three: The terrible problem of teacher identity

Working with in-service teachers on educational, counselling and personal development award-bearing courses over many years, I consider I have accumulated a degree of insight and wisdom on the apparently dynamic relationship between personal and professional identity. Notions of teacher professional development in the UK over the same time period have however progressively disengaged from the centrality of developing teacher-as-person and moved distinctly in the direction of those teachers in training acquiring externally defined standards and competences. Although retaining some measure of myself as a 'responsible anarchist' (after Atkinson, 2002: 73), I have found this a deeply disturbing turn, and one which is at its core antithetical to my beliefs and my professional sense of moral purpose.

The study, therefore, set out to explore the modern experience of identity as narrated by teachers and to explore if the experience of a consciously constructed identity exists at the expense of deeper and more unified but less easily accessible subjective experience.

Conceptualizations of identity and self within philosophy and social science and, thereby, educational discourse, have been notoriously problematic not just in definition but consequently in terms of research study. Any discussion of concepts related to self has, of course, been laboured by the foundations laid in the split between mind and body as inspired by Descartes' original cogito: 'I am thinking therefore I exist'.

A caucus of postmodern theorists (Rorty, 1979, 1989; Bernstein, 1983; Taylor, 1989) have reacted strongly against notions of the objectification of selfhood and individuality, considering it dehumanizing and in need of deconstruction. The

postmodern view considers the objective self to be detached from the influence of inner experience and to be overly susceptible to external influences. Cushman (1995: 214) refers to this as the 'empty self', while Gergen (1991: 16), concerned about the impact of social saturation of contemporary society on our consciousness and relationships, terms it the 'saturated self', thereby implying that there is no consistent 'inner self' as we absorb multiple voices and cope with the relativism of 'truth'. The notion of a unitary self, of a singular, cohesive, and essential identity has also in recent times been 'de-constructed' by post-structuralist and feminist theories (Alcoff, 1988; Weedon, 1987). What therefore postmodernism and poststructuralism challenge is the idea that individuals have an 'authentic core or pure essence that has been repressed by society' (Britzman, 1992: 25).

Directly as a result of the challenges raised above, there are three main aspects I wrestle with throughout this study. The first relates to the nature and conceptualization of identity itself and the extent to which, within a narrative genre, I must relinquish the more modernist sense of self (arising from my embeddedness in much-loved humanistic and psychodynamic approaches) and where this leaves any conceptualization of 'unconscious'; the second concerns notions of 'the personal' and 'the professional' and the need to explore whether or not this split is as outdated and treacherous as the postmodern literature suggests, or to concur with Weingarten (1997: xi) that *'the dichotomy between the personal and professional is one that has never made sense to me*'; and thirdly, in employing the singular 'teacher identity' in the title, am I permitting the potential for a plurality of selves rather than a fixed notion of identity? Instead of seeing personality as a fixed set of tendencies, modern psychology is coming round to the view of multitudinous selves in which who we are shifts, sometimes radically from moment to moment and from context to context (after Bennett-Goleman, 2001).

Paradox Four: Creative Narrative - crisis of method

Whilst there is evidence of increasing tolerance for experimentation in qualitative research more generally (Lincoln & Denzin's (2000: 1047) 'seventh moment') and narrative form, in particular (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), there appears to be

relatively little blending so far in the research worlds of arts-based inquiry and narrative inquiry.

The use of visual methodology through research photography (Harper, 2000) and film is perhaps the exception in the form of visual sociology (Becker, 1974), visual anthropology (Biella, Changnon & Seaman, 1997) and visual ethnography (Harper, 1994,1998) but these movements tend to remain tangential rather than mainstream. Kuhn's (1991, 1995) work on family photographs and Dewdney's (1991) project on narrativizing family albums are examples which perhaps come closest to autobiographical and biographical forms in narrative inquiry. Working within the genre of narrative inquiry in education for over thirty years, Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 154) draw on Barone and Eisner (1997) and call for further experimentation with narrative form through art-based forms of inquiry and text presentation.

However, wishing to use creative arts was, from the outset, not simply intended as 'an experiment'; the intention was for these to be at the heart of the process of inquiry as well as represented in the final form of the research text. What this means is that the introduction of arts-based processes with the participants was not solely viewed as an additional aid or stimulus to research conversations but adopted as a potential means for initially bypassing language in order to allow for the possibility of previously unaware, tacit or 'unconscious' experiences to be symbolized that might otherwise have been inhibited by normal story-telling.

McNiff (1998:13) defines art-based research as "a method of inquiry which uses the elements of the creative arts therapy experience, including the making of art by the researcher, as ways of understanding the significance of what we do ..." Within the therapeutic use of art (Furth, 1988; Dalley & Case, 1992; McNiff, 1992, 1998; Rubin, 1999; Silverstone, 1987; Simon 1992 etc.) the power of non-verbal expression to access and permit expression of otherwise unavailable or dormant significant emotional and embodied experiences and events (both positive and negative, past and present) is well-documented (Milner, 1977; 1988). Such descriptions fly in the face of much contemporary thinking in narrative inquiry where language in the verbal sense is privileged and where, in postmodern writings, the locus of meaning shifts from the individual to *'the play of linguistic signs, narratives and power'* (Crossley, 2000: 26). However, like Frosh (2002: 134), I am doubtful about this absolute 'turn

to language' which suggests that nothing meaningful exists outside words. Using words is particularly important in attending to consciously constructed or intended meanings, where language equals conscious rationalization, but within this, there is the danger of reducing all meaning to that which can be narrated.

> 'there is always something which remains, something 'excessive' or other to what is spoken.'
>
> (Frosh, 2002: 119).

For this reason, I consider the current perspective on narrative inquiry to be somewhat limited, to the extent that it fails presently *'to adequately address the experiential and personal dimensions of human experience'* (Crossley, 2000: 40) and non-conscious elements in particular. In this study, therefore, I tasked myself to find a way to balance the potential for non-verbal (unconscious) expression of self-experience with that which could be narrated (both orally and in written form). 'Creative narrative' was therefore the term adopted for the combination of arts-based research forms and narrative inquiry. Whether or not 'creative narrative' as a form would provide evidence for unconscious elements in the participants' narratives of identity remains moot.

In summary, the inquiry will begin now with an autoethnographic exploration of a stumbling-block in my current professional identity thrown up by my study for the EdD. From this I will unravel my intellectual concerns on unconscious, identity, narrative, language and image and their various relationships through relevant research and scholarly literatures, while attempting to step outside my taken-for-granted assumptions. The inquiry itself will describe how I engaged ethically with teacher participants in exploring their narratives through their creative images, a process which I term 'creative narrative'. My goal is to present each narrative as montage, through which the teachers and their images will speak for themselves and, in so doing, I will try to show how they make meaning (structure their narratives) around attributions to unconscious dimensions operating in their storied lives. The final chapter will summarize what emerges from the process and outcome of the inquiry and attempt to theorize the findings within the limitations of the study. In the epilogue I intend to bring some closure to my own narrative of identity at this staging-post on my professional journey.

CHAPTER 1: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Outside the spoon-drawer, naked and skinless in search of my professional esteem: the tale of an academic pro.

'Just write' I left Kim's office with these words ringing in my ears. The comment was her response to my having asked at the closing of the supervision session what my priorities should be out of all I had to do on my EdD thesis and with the prospect of a precious two-week window of time in which to progress. It was being thrown the most difficult challenge of all. Spoken lightly, the command 'Just write' meant no more reading, no more talking, no more sorting sources, no more note-making, no more avoidance. No more doing anything rather than **it**. No more cleaning out the spoon-drawer rather than write!

'Just write' meant something different from facing the blank white (electronic) page, more than finding a place to start; what I really heard was 'it's time to find your own voice now'. I still feel the panic squeezing my innards, invisibly propelling me to bend double. Before this paralyses me, therefore, I know I must start, get some words down - start where? Where I have always started - where I am in my experience at this moment. "What's up?"; "What's on top?"; "How do I feel?"; "What is my body experiencing?" At such times of panic and despair, it's my only grounding. It seems all that is reliable. All that I can catch hold of. Putting these fragmented imaginal, visceral and somatic reactions into some type of form through words or images has been my mainstay and my survival at various points in my life both personally and professionally.

Above this survival-line of heuristic writing and representation, I know I can write within the academic genre, after years of struggle, writer's block and eventually legitimation through the rites de passages (peer reviewed publications, research contracts, published reports, book chapters) of the academic world. At this level, however, my writing reads somewhat unnatural. Fettered. It reads like the outworking of a tight, constricted mind, a process of hammering tightly together words, ideas, sources, evidence – no spaces, no excess, no ambiguity, pared to the minimum. These are in part the criteria upheld by the educational and psychological

disciplines and the academy to which I have for so long belonged. They are also, however, part of my internal scholar-critic, who is extremely intolerant of waffle. My image of engaging in this type of writing is that I am building meccano structures, in which pieces must fit precisely in order to be soldered into place. The structures that such words can build are sturdy and robust and may even be interesting, colourful and three-dimensional but in the end without flexibility, without flow and where my voice (what voice?) is suffocated out by the tightness of text that the scholarly-I demands. It is time-demanding and perhaps now on reflection ultimately soul-destroying work. Breathless!

Where to start? I have always felt awestruck by the fact that in beginning to write any lecture, essay or article, the openings are infinite but yet, once the first words or phrases go down on the page, the direction of the work is already being prescribed, determined or at least styled in some way. If I start here, it will lead this way: if I start there it will lead somewhere else. Somehow I find these endless possibilities paralyzing. Like a mini-existential crisis. But today, I know where to begin … it has been confirmed in a variety of places by people committed to me…..and yet I still feel my self resistant to committing the first words to page.

I need to find a way to talk about- nay, write about - why I find it so hard to own up publicly to my colleagues, friends and other academics that I am doing an EdD at the University of Bristol and that there is really very little professionally of more importance to me at this point in time. There: I have said it and I feel little emotionally. It seems trite. Banal. And yet, every time I talk about this (to those few to whom I can disclose) I find myself burning with shame and my eyes stinging with tears of humiliation. I find it excruciating to say. It feels like owning up to something awful, shameful and deeply self-betraying. I wish I could just run away, complete it, and the letters EdD suddenly appear against my name on the University web-site: Ruth Leitch MA; MSc(Clin); EdD, Head of Graduate School of Education, QUB.

Now it doesn't feel so trite. Confronting the final sentence of the last paragraph, I can hardly type for tears blurring the keyboard and I have to stop and give in to the overwhelming agony that is up on top now. How ridiculous, I hear them say: Over this?.....Racking sobs subsided. Where I have travelled inside in the last fifteen minutes has been, in a sense, unbelievable. It still amazes me how the

release of deep emotion psychically stirs up, through the inner darkness, seemingly unconnected memories and old agonies and eventually, if lucky, some insight. I caught a glimpse of an early event, age 9, of feeling humiliated publicly by my own inability to manage my feelings around losing badly at a board-game surrounded by siblings and cousins. I became painfully exposed to myself. I couldn't hold back the tears. Then, it became a public event with family and friends embarrassed, laughing, teasing and humiliating me further about 'being a bad loser', 'always needing to be top-cat': I felt completely raw and exposed in the moment, with nowhere to hide; I couldn't account for myself. Misunderstood, I wished the world would open up and swallow me. It didn't of course. I just had to stumble through it. Humiliated. Praying invisibility.

I know I have carried this early shaming experience like a wounding. For example, I avoid individual competitive sports where possible. But how on earth does an early experience such as this connect to my difficulty in owning up publicly to doing an EdD now? It seems light years different both in terms of time and focus. In the only words I can use to describe it, any similarity seems to lie in the fact that I feel that my self is exposed to *myself* in just the same painful way now as it was back then, age 9. It's a similar feeling of being shamed. I should have done my PhD at the right time, way back then, when it was expected and not now at this stage of my career and with my institutional status. I find the word 'status' hard to own as I want to protest 'I am not status-conscious', or so I say. There is something excruciating for me, as I see it, about being the Head of a University Department of Education and not having the academic credentials, or title that characteristically fit the post. As long as I don't put my attention on this perception, I can do my job, as well as or better than the next person. But when I do put my attention on it and say 'I am not Dr, actually', or 'I don't have a doctorate' or am confronted by a list of peers and I am the only one without a title, I cringe inside embarrassedly. It is too hard just to own up, to come out and say 'Yes, I am ashamed. Yes, I am doing a doctorate; yes, after all this time, it really matters that much to me to get this title, this affirmation.'

Instead, I want to recoil defensively and shout back 'But I could have done one. I was awarded a scholarship as a psychology graduate. I chose not to. I said then I didn't need it. I wasn't going to put myself through the academic agony I witnessed in PhD

psychology students; I could do what I wanted to do without the Academy's final stripe' And that is what I did. I rebelled! As a graduate clinical psychologist of twenty-four years of age, I was invited into the counselling training rooms of the University, where I shut firmly the door on doctoral study and crawled into the skins of generations of teachers training to be counsellors. It was great! It was intense! I did it well! I believed I made a difference out there in the world of children where it counted. And within those walls, I never lost the joy of academic challenge nor the joy of teaching it to others. And through this period, I stalwartly proclaimed I never felt the need of a PhD and genuinely believed it. So how did I get from there to here?

Ambition? Ambition is my best bet as to what got me here and that, like owning up to status-consciousness, is hard for me to swallow. I find it hard to accept that I might be driven by ambition rather than some sense of selflessness or ideological agenda. At some point (and I recall the moment) I came out from under the skins of caring for those teachers and looked to myself (though not in the way I had looked for it in the years of personal therapy, encounter groups, psychodrama, transpersonal groups and creative therapy etc). Here, I was challenged to take a different direction – to take a step into the establishment of the then University Education Department, to join the management team. It was a shock that anyone should have recognized any potential in me for this direction. I was a 'touchy-feely' counsellor - one of the younger members of staff, not teacher trained and female - one of the only two females in a full-time academic staff of twenty plus at that time. I momentarily caught a glimpse of a different me. In the wings. Taking charge, instead of facilitating. Could I do it? I was shocked. I felt intrigued by the idea. I was tickled by the affirmation but what about all my values?

"There's nothing wrong with raw, naked ambition" an even younger up-and-coming male lecturer, now Professor, had once said to me. I was appalled but I never forgot it. It rung in my ears and resonated nauseously somewhere inside.

I didn't see myself as the management-type. I cared deeply about my work with teachers. Teaching from the inside out was what I was about. Empowering individual teachers; helping them understand their own process; releasing their capacities for empathy, emotional holding, immediacy, intimacy, creativity and thus social action on behalf of children was what I was committed to. I wasn't a real teacher in the

education world but I was a darn good psychologist, facilitator and counsellor-trainer. I had a contribution to make to the world of education from the margins and I was making it. And now I was being invited to step-out from the margins, to come out, right into the centre. Scary.

Eventually - and I don't think the decision took too long, (ambition, and the challenge, had bitten) - I accepted the position and took on the mantle of education (involving the management of a teaching division in the School) without either being a qualified teacher or having a PhD. I recall the excitement mixed with fear in the early days of this new challenge. Stepping-out also meant a physical (and more importantly emotional) separation from a former colleague in counselling with whom there had been a type of symbiotic relationship over fifteen years. Fifteen years which had produced some deeply personal encounters and amazing experiential learning for ourselves and others and some system impact but, regrettably, not one joint or indeed individual publication to record, validate or celebrate our most powerful work together. I have great grief at this wasted opportunity.

This promotion was looked askance by some male academic colleagues, who may have felt that other males were passed over in this apparent sponsorship or positive discrimination of a younger female, who may have had significant years of service but no PhD! For the first time, I realize now that part of my present shame is also continuing to carry this – the sneaking (but ultimately mistaken) suspicion that they just might have been right, that I, as a woman, a less qualified woman, wasn't worthy and possibly couldn't do the job, at least not as well as a man could. And, there were those who made it their job publicly to undermine me by attacking my professionalism whenever they could. As I write this I am now in touch with some of the anger, hurt and indignation of having been made to feel so professionally vulnerable on a regular basis. Consequently, I felt the need to defend myself: in particular, the vulnerable exposed part of not having my PhD in this public, high-profile job in the education community of the University. I continued to pretend (to myself) that it didn't matter; ignore what they might be speculating. Anyway, I didn't have time for such niceties now. This was a twelve-hour a day job and I was going to do it not just well but doubly well! I was a woman with a mission. I wanted to prove myself – to my self and to those who had backed me.

I don't regret any of this - but this doesn't stop the waves of feeling that wash over and stop me in my tracks as I write this. I have never taken the easy path. I always seem to make it as difficult as possible. I wonder whether this is part of the shame-based personality - the deep narcissistic wound that never allows anything to be just-so, it has to provide penance and the challenge to prove oneself. A dark night of the soul! Dramatic and powerfully catholic in its imagery. I realise that the step I had taken was actually one into professional isolation. I had been alongside others at critical points in their academic careers, where I was very aware that they were making their ultimate, moral professional choice – to sell their soul or not to the system for advancement. I swore I would never be that person and here I was alone, wondering, whether I had made the right choice. Could I do this job and retain my sense of my self and my values? Could I do it my way? The isolation was not just the sense of separation from other colleagues alongside the loss of the former security of my counsellor/teacher role but I had also crossed the invisible, invisible even to me, discipline boundary from psychology into education. I had always felt proud of being a clinical psychologist. Only five or six applicants each year got selected in Northern Ireland to train. I had been one and had chosen this route in preference to the PhD. I had always been drawn to the clinical aspects of psychology and this was a far more practical direction for me than inert psychological research on cognition. On qualifying, I had no wish to suffer long-term the disempowerment of the medical model in psychiatry and was glad to have been given the opportunity to 'work upstream' with teachers in university teacher education encouraging preventive and developmental strategies for the positive mental health of vulnerable children in schools. In the early years I had felt apologetic about not being a teacher myself to the in-service teacher community but offered a genuinely-felt support role from the margins, working with those teachers and sharing my knowledge and expertise. I had, I believe, no professional preciousness.

In this new administrative role, however, I could no longer cling to my marginal status. I was in a prime leadership position in university teacher education. Not only did I not have qualified teacher status but neither was I an educational specialist. Not even a real academic (whatever that is). Interestingly, I no longer felt comfortable at clinical psychology meetings. I was different (in any case they were all being paid significantly more than me by now!). Nevertheless, here I was heading up, directing

and making decisions about the needs, focus and requirements of teachers electing to study for in-service awards. I knew in-service education and I knew teachers' needs – well many of them, having worked so closely with such significant numbers over the years. These assumptions kept me going. Legitimated me to my self. And, I also reflected that there would be a quorum of teachers out there in their communities of practice that had been taught by me, and who would, from experience, trust that I would do a good job on their behalf. All this helped. Nevertheless I was no longer fully psychologist nor teacher educator. I didn't belong to either professional community. I was in a liminal space – betwixt and between, probably where I had always been professionally but never before so starkly.

Not long after entry to this phase of my professional life, I was charged by the then director of the School to set up a new doctorate of education in the University, the first in Ireland, and to have it on the books for the forthcoming academic year. I researched those programmes existing at that time by visiting – in particular Leeds, Institute of London and Bristol, the latter being the first taught doctorate in the UK. I knew the programme director, the key designer of the EdD programme at the University of Bristol at that time: he had been an external examiner for the masters programme in my in-service division. So I contacted him to see if I could come over and view a programme in action. I went with my long-term counselling colleague and we sat in on a day session of an educational management module. Not my area of interest at all, but by lunchtime I was hooked. I felt so stimulated. I wanted this process for me. Visiting Bristol last week, umpteen years on and now registered as a student on the programme, I can still recall the sureness of this feeling that first morning when I was there with a different mission. Visiting Bristol now as a member of that EdD student community, I can still honestly say that the verve has never left me. I came back and developed our own university EdD programme. More significantly, the reaction was very positive by the former head of school when I said sheepishly one day, 'You know I would really like that for me: I would really like to do the EdD at Bristol'.

An intellectual excitement coursed through me from day one, module one that has never abated. I was exposed to ideas and thinking that I do not believe I would easily have encountered given the academic grooves I had been in. What this exposure did,

I now see, was to provide intellectual bridges for me between psychology, counselling, research and education. I began to glimpse ways of creatively making links between the domains of knowledge presented that I would never had the commitment to do otherwise…and yet I was intimidated by it all as well. I felt clever contributing in the modules but this was followed by periods of frozen panic and writer's block in preparation for assignments. They were invariably late as a result. Not only did I want to do the assignments well, I wanted them to be exceptional, to appear talented – certainly of a standard noticeably appropriate to or better for someone of my academic experience and standing! After all, I was being taught by academic peers and I didn't want to let myself, nor the School that had backed me, down. Fear of being exposed again! (Fear of being exposed as ordinary? I sense something of grandiosity appearing here!)

Breaking through the barriers of little confidence in writing, having ideas but nothing to say, redrafting gobbledegook was a painful process that took a lot of support (and counselling), involved a lot of tears and ripped up papers until eventually after a number of years (and excellent feedback on the finished products) I began to 'own' the process of writing and began to see myself as someone who could write and write well. The trouble was that, despite various creative approaches within the texts, it was as described above, robust but breathless! Some of the pieces did get presented as conference papers and some did get published. Interestingly, and I almost chose not to acknowledge this issue to my self here, I knew that the University of Bristol wished for some acknowledgement or co-authorship for articles produced via the EdD programme of study. Somehow I could never bring myself to do this. It would put me in a one-down position and I couldn't countenance that. I would have winced at this public representation! This decision was never worked out consciously but I know that it went on inside. A sort of subliminal self-justification was that I never sought help from any of the tutors and never submitted drafts so I considered I didn't really have any palpable obligation to acknowledge their contribution.

There is a kind of inverted arrogance here that is painful to catch awareness of. In the desperate need to make up for the gaping shortcomings as perceived, I try too hard to compensate. It's like somewhere I don't want to be just good-enough, I do

really want to be better-than. Maybe they were right back then, when I was 9, "I do always want to be top-cat", I can't bear "not to be the winner." I feel confused at this point; "Of course because you have touched the rawness of the wound", I hear an inner voice say. I also hear words like 'narcissistic wound', 'compensation', 'grandiosity' registering and I don't want to start analysing myself (but then this too has always been part of my story ever since I can recall). I just can't work out whether I am actually a nice person with a serious (and opaque it seems) hurt that I carry from before I had language and that leaves me with a gaping, voracious hole in my self-confidence. No matter what achievements, successes, affirmations or positive feedback are offered into this hole, like the black ones of the galaxy, the goodness is just sucked out and I get no sustenance. The deficit can never be made up! Nothing will make any difference. Confronting this possibility just cracks me up. Or, am I actually a horrid type of person, deeply pretentious and arrogant, who presents as ordinary, humble and selfless but who takes all compliments and throws them away as meaningless since, in fact, behind the charade, I see myself as superior and always have done. I hear Kim's voice here saying gently "Both and neither. Dividing the world and yourself into good and bad is just one model of self. Binarism of the self is an outdated model now." And where does that leave me? Without my intellectual structures where am I? Without my psychology, I feel at present in an intellectual flux where I can trust no idea. So the only place left to go is back to my experience, my felt sense and I just fold in tears over the keyboard. However, today I am alone, unlike yesterday, and it's hard to provide comfort or direction to my self. I grasp rather pathetically that I must be mostly nice as someone arrogant would never feel as sad as I do just now. I can't believe how much and how deeply I have cried writing this piece to date and I wonder will I ever be able to use it for my precious thesis or is just a self-indulgent waste of time. I am sure if I was on the outside of me, I would see it very differently and know how to respond to the person writing much more clearly. I cannot stop now at this stage and it's so hard to go on. I have no choice. Would achieving my EdD really make any difference? Simply one more jem-item offered into the fathomless, insatiable hole that makes no difference to my self-doubt. How can anyone be this self-doubting ?

At some point in my career I turned into an 'academic prostitute'! The metaphor came to me yesterday within the pit I entered under my tears and where I had also

found the nine-year old shaming incident. I don't know how to write about being an academic prostitute or whether I even want to. It feels dangerous to me and to those around me; Sex and the city, yes. Sex and academia, no! Generally university-life could be characterized as a cess-bed of intellectualization, repression and sublimation washed over by huge draughts of patriarchialism, with little or no room for the feminine! ("How patronizing do you like your equality?" as the Punch cartoonist said). I sense I am in danger here of crossing over into a twenty year old ranting rage fuelled by the relentless experience of female oppression and, in so doing, avoiding my own story of being an academic prostitute. Neat. I have always been very aware of my feminine side, carrying it strongly, uncompromisingly, through my academic years but not, I believe, flauntingly. Perhaps more seductively than flagrantly. And all this with a touch of feminism. Being attractive to others has been a hugely strong part of my identity as long and early as I can remember (currently being severely challenged by the ravages of aging). I was no ravishing beauty but I had something and I invested in it. I knew I was an odd paradox as an academic in education circles, not only was I a female, a rare commodity in itself, but noticeably so. I stood out. I knew that I had the power to attract men to me if not for my ideas then for how I looked. When they got close enough then I could bedazzle them. They would find I was not just a pretty face. I had ideas and was challenging too. A lethal mixture and I knew I could use it to advantage should I choose. I rarely chose but there are times I did. And times also when I suspected I was chosen for that self-same mix.

Taking this lens, it is now painful to stare coldly at those defining moments in my professional achievements and question whether I was selected always for the right reasons. And, could I ever truly know? Thus, under scrutiny, I am left wondering whether it really was my high-class psychology honours and my scintillating interview that got me selected for a place on the highly competitive Masters in clinical psychology. Being the one chosen to do a clinical placement in the Institute of Psychiatry at the Maudsley Hospital, London by a visiting all-male British Psychology Society team – what was the real basis? Having been recommended to enter university cloisters, at age twenty-four, by a male education lecturer and his professor who had shared sessions with me on a counselling placement, did they really recommend me for the temporary lectureship post because of my skills and

aptitude?. On top of these I felt compelled to check out yesterday whether or not it had been an honest process whereby I got the management post in the education department ten years ago, ahead of my male colleague. In terms of the paperwork, it looks on the surface as if it had integrity. But, maybe my face just fitted better and I certainly had a nicer body than the colleague passed over!

In a way, I feel like I can't win on this one and neither can men. If they choose me, I say it was for the wrong reasons, probably not my intellect. If they don't choose me, I say, typically, they chose their own, rejecting me, the woman. It is misogyny at work as usual; what else could you expect? In either case, for me, it is oppressive. The excruciating part, of course, is the paradox – the doubt that it might have been my looks or my body rather than my intellect or even these in combination that got me to where I am. In every case, the doubt renders all achievements ultimately meaningless to me….and I then spend the next period of time bolstering myself against the feeling deep down that in accepting the position, I have prostituted myself.

Of course, I want there to be a holistic perspective on people. Valuing intellect above all other dimensions to being a human being is in itself part of the dominant male culture. I have stood up against this uni-dimensional mentality all my working life. I teach about emotion and intellect in cognitive psychology; I promote person-centred philosophies in counselling and trauma work; I use a holistic model (physical: emotional: cognitive: spiritual) for teaching developmental psychology; why on earth should I feel so self-betraying when I consider myself chosen for something other than or in addition to my intellect? It's not just about being selected on an intellectual basis alone. The fact is however, I think I have offered up, on occasion, my attractiveness to men, particularly men who have intellectual standing, or of whom I was in some kind of awe, in order to give my self academic kudos. Of course I had to be attracted to them too but the point was to get close to their minds. At close proximity, I could check out two things: firstly, their thinking; the secrets of their trade and where were their limits; and secondly, I could compare myself, incorporating their assessment of my thinking. The pay-off was in the currency of academic credibility! I gave them my attention and they paid with their kind - academic affirmation.

What's the background to an 'academic prostitute'? What are the personal conditions that can lead to such a profession in trade? From the trusty psychoanalytic perspective, one of my main ideological safety-blankets, where are the significant roots in childhood experience that made the indelible imprint? The story itself is too long and convoluted and I really don't know if there is a root cause (at least I don't know at this point). Today, I don't want to touch the sentimental feelings for the girl-child growing up in a rurally isolated, dysfunctional family in Northern Ireland. I've narrated this story too many times before and in so many different ways and rarely without emotion at the layers of loneliness and loss. Beyond nostalgia, I want to be dispassionate and just pull out the threads.

Within the kingdom of childhood imagination and fantasy, the world of the mind and of books was an endless miasma of escapism – a veritable storehouse of possible selves for me to act and re-enact. They passed the hours of gloom and dread. Seemingly poles apart, I could be a Miss World or a racehorse vet – two of my favourite daydream characters. Variously, I would parade around the lonesome rooms in adult high-heels, swathed in reams of netting, and tiaras, stare at myself in the mirrors, pose and win first place at every empty pageant. Or, I would pore over, with endless fascination, graphic and gruesome pictures of the skinless anatomy of horses, learning the parts by rote, playing out in my head the expert veterinary surgeon called to remote farms to operate on lame stallions - amazing everyone, particularly men, with my skill and healing powers.

In spite of all I have said above, I have never described these regular, solo flights of fantasy before. They often hover around the shadowlands of my awareness when I cast my mind back to childhood, but today they manifested in this description. Stopping at them for too long, however, just might be painful, not just for the loneliness of the little girl in the bubbles but for the points when her bubbles burst at the end of each day and the family came home. Despite all the apparent security of protestant, rural, middle-classism and what this meant in this culture at that time, this was a family cloaked and staggering around in the harsh secrets of alcoholism. It was a swamp-land in which it was hard to take pride, inside or out. Yet, appearances were crucial. Invisibly but immaculately, I learned to carry the fear everywhere and the shame imperceptibly, with a smile of respectability. Nevertheless, underneath, it

was difficult to find things that enabled me really to feel good about my self. My prettiness and my intelligence seemed to be my saving graces - the two aspects of me that attracted maximum attention outside the family and distracted from the dread-fullness underneath. Looking back, these two attributions assumed significance out of proportion to all other dimensions of me (I presently have a block in imagining what other dimensions there might be!). Certainly, given the violently emotional windstorms that frequently tore through the fabric of our home, the truth was that my self did not count for me unless it was in the service of and had secured the safety of all its members on a daily and indeed nightly basis. I was often the last one to give my self up to the unconsciousness of sleep. In this chaotic familial context, prettiness and intelligence were of value only if they could be used to woo a drunken father away from conflict with the others or from self-harm. I am aware of the strangest feeling as I write this. It is one of feeling frozen and watchful, all senses focused without emotion, hardly daring to breathe. I feel the same heady hyper-vigilance, in this moment as I try to find the keys on the keyboard, as I did when I regularly patrolled the landing and stairs in the dark to check on the sounds of the night.

Intelligence was however eventually to become my passport to the world beyond the family – a world to which I desperately and selfishly wanted to escape (to find my self) but away from a world to which I felt, and was made to feel, responsibly and intricately bound. Going to university was the only legitimate means of passage – three A levels and an offer from a Scottish university and I was on my way. Prettiness and cleverness, masking over the unhealed agony and tension of leaving a home unprotected, now well-established as the core warp and weft of my identity were folded neatly, packed as my two main securities for my future journey.

I wonder what all this tells you about me and perhaps, more importantly, me about me. As I sit back, after three days of writing, I think the thing which has just struck me most is that this is a different version of me. This one had never been written before. I had no idea what it would be or where it would go when I started out with the original direction from Kim or the question of why it is so ridiculously hard for me to say I am studying for an EdD at Bristol University. I think the statement will still stick in my throat but I am amazed at the way this story unfolded and, in my

terms, wrote itself. Yes, of course I hold the parts, the experiences, I hold the lenses and the words too but, I followed as far as possible my experience and tried to capture, as honestly as possible, within the confines of language what seemed to appear in my awareness. I tried not to shirk what presented itself. Now I know there are models and levels of psychological and sociological analysis I could or should incisively apply to the work if this is an academic piece and, at every turn, I have resisted this. I wanted to see if I could write in such a way as to breathe and inhale sufficiently in order to hear my own voice (the still small voice) as a way of understanding something of my professional identity. I begin to see things (spectres and low-life) I have only ever previously glimpsed and some I have never before known in this way. I am aware that the answers to the question(s) I set out with are not starkly pointed up nor summarized and this may be a step left to complete. Nevertheless, at this stage, I am suspicious of going too far in this direction. I may also have foreclosed (undoubtedly so) on the narrative itself and know that for this story told here, there is the other one untold, in the shadows, on the cutting room floor – the bits that even now have remained below the level of my conscious awareness or that I decided consciously or unconsciously not to commit to paper.

But, overwhelmingly, I feel a strange sense of pleasure and contentment as I arrive at this point this Saturday evening. In spite of all the tears shed in the process and my internal critic frequently chipping in "well this will be a waste of time, what's this got to do with your thesis; another great spoon-drawer illusion!", I stuck with my compunction to write it and as far as possible write it freely. As it moved itself along, I really enjoyed the flow many times, the sense of being driven by the story-within rather than constructing a pre-planned pattern from without. Finally, I am aware that my use of language and vividness of description changed towards the end of the story, particularly when I was uncovering my childhood strands to the academic prostitute. Here, and this is where I leave it for now, I am unsure as to whether this was due to an increasing sense of freedom of 'breathing with the words' or whether the vibrancy and anarchy within childhood recollections impelled me to be unfettered, using a richer texture of words. In any case, on re-reading, the earlier writing seems more ponderous to me by comparison but perhaps that is simply the price tag of trying to capture the seeming burden of adult experience.

CHAPTER 2: CONSCIOUSNESS, UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY – THE 'BUGBEAR OF BEHAVIOURISM'!

2.1 Setting out in search of consciousness

From even a cursory examination of the recent literature on consciousness (only one step removed from the unconscious) I have always been struck by the fact that the topic has surfaced in psychology largely under the auspices of philosophers such as McGinn (1991), Flanagan (1992) Searle (1992) and Dennett (1995). Unlike almost any other area in psychology, discussions on consciousness are interwoven with philosophical references. What is evident here, as far as I can discern, is the consequences for psychology (for the first half of the twentieth century, after James, 1922) of having ousted the study of consciousness, in preference to behaviourism's requirements for the study of observable behaviour, at the same time as psychoanalysis was preoccupied with the unconscious. It was undoubtedly the 'bugbear' and remains so. Meanwhile, philosophy's concern with the nature of consciousness has never disappeared but is now having to make space for psychologists' re-entry and claims to the 'consciousness arena.'

Consciousness studies is an area of literature to which I found myself returning time and again. Nevertheless, it is a domain of knowledge that I often find confusing, deeply oppositional, sometimes self-inflated and riven with the most vitriolic of exchanges between thinkers; (see Wheelwell, 1998 on Nunn, 1998 as a case par excellence). Since 'consciousness' is not explicitly, at least by definition, part of my area of study, I have wondered why I stuck with the literature on this phenomenon. Was it some type of intellectual fascination which was in fact a distraction to the main body of the work (another great act of 'intellectual spoon-drawerism') or was there some other intuitive, grail-like pursuit going on, below my awareness, that would turn out to be crucial at a key moment? For now, I do not have a clear answer but I have rationalized that, however diffuse this motivation may be, I need to pursue consciousness on two fronts.

Firstly, I have to satisfy myself on current thinking about what is the nature of the relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness or conscious and unconscious, outside any trappings of the Freudian or Jungian unconscious. In this

respect, through this exploration, I also want to make sure that I commit no contemporary 'intellectual gaffe'. Secondly, since notions of identity are linked closely to the concept of 'the self,' and self and identity seem closely tied to subjective experience and indeed self-consciousness, all of which lie within the purview of consciousness, it would seem foolhardy to ignore the potential for my re-thinking these humanistic constructs and locating them within current philosophical, psychological and scientific thinking. This should ensure that I bring to any narrative constructions of identity, which seem to me so deeply (and disturbingly) sociological at present, some possibility of a psychological substrate to counteract the imbalance, at least within this study. As I forge out into a brief review of the literature on consciousness, I must beware that the boundaries between the two quests outlined above are unclear and overlapping at times. Nevertheless, for the purposes of clarity in expression, both issues are treated as separate sections although it is acknowledged that they are inextricably linked.

2.2 The ineffable relationship between conscious and unconscious

> 'Consciousness is a much smaller part of our mental life than we are conscious of, because we cannot be conscious of what we are not conscious of.'
>
> (Jaynes, 1990: 23).

Conscious and unconscious, even in our modern, dualistic world would still tend to be viewed as companion concepts. Defining unconscious, therefore, begs some reference to the nature of conscious or consciousness. Nevertheless, despite the fact that there has been a tremendous surge of interest in the problem of consciousness in cognitive psychology, neuroscience and, particularly, philosophy in the last two decades, I could find relatively little direct reference to the unconscious in the relevant literature on consciousness (Bermúdez, 1998; Marcel & Bisiach, 1994; Seagar[•], 1999). This field has been mostly concerned with questions about the origin

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[•] A case in point would be Seagar's (1999) book '*Theories of consciousness: an introduction and assessment*', which has neither the term 'non-conscious' nor 'unconscious' available for reference in its index.

of consciousness (Jaynes, 1990), how consciousness arises in matter (Nagel, 1994), the function of consciousness (Shannon, 1990), the neurobiological basis of consciousness (Paul Churchland, 1986, Searle, 1997), intentionality and consciousness (Searle, 1983), qualities of conscious experience or 'qualia' (Dennett, 1988, 1991, 1995) and consciousness as a fundamental feature of the world or, panpsychism (Chalmers, 1996). These are all deeply contested areas of debate, mostly philosophic, occasionally esoteric but with the neuroscientific approaches being the exception, where a number of proponents have both literally and metaphorically taken a more scientific research-slice through the brain, in search of consciousness (Paul Churchland 1986, Weiskrantz, 1986; Patricia Churchland,1995). However, in line with Rao, (1998: 309), it is clear that, *'consciousness means different things to different people.'* As a result, there have indeed been profound disagreements over the definition of consciousness with philosophers such as McGinn (1991) arguing that consciousness was resistant for all time to a complete explanation, while others, such as Dennett (1991) argue vehemently that not only is a full explanation of consciousness possible but the construction of conscious machines is imminent.

In the literature on consciousness, the term 'unconscious' has tended to be replaced by the less apparently contentious 'non-conscious' or 'non-conscious processes'. This emphasizes the potential for consciousness to be viewed as a cognitive process within contemporary cognitive science. Thus, we find Dennett (1995), the philosopher, along with some higher-order thought theorists (e.g. Rosenthal, 1986) (HOT) desiring to explain consciousness in terms of a set of mental states that are themselves non-conscious. What this really proposes is a view of consciousness that cannot be limited to subjective awareness and that, in a very significant sense, consciousness also refers to and, must include for its explanation, nonconscious mental phenomena (Rao, op. cit.: 313). This notion of consciousness, including self-consciousness as restricted, while the amount of internal and external sensory processing going on is large, (Marcel & Bisiach, 1994: 147) is not new to the domains of psychology nor theories of counselling and psychotherapy. Thus, the dominant view from current philosophical or psychological views of mind is that conscious experience is functionally and dynamically related to unconscious processes and is constantly being influenced by many unconscious processes:

> 'Unconscious aspects of mental activity, such as motor and cognitive routines, and so-called unconscious memories, intentions and expectations play a fundamental role in shaping and directing our conscious experience.'
>
> (Edelman & Tononi, 2000: 176).

2.3 Consciousness, self and identity - a gappy series of eruptions.

> 'One's self is the bearer of one's personal identity over time.'
>
> (Berofsky, 1995: 234)

Where understanding consciousness becomes critical to the current study is hinted at above and that is in terms of how consciousness of oneself relates to experience - of who we are as subject and object (James' 'I' and 'me': 1922) and how we perceive ourselves to be located socially, culturally and historically:

> 'Consciousness, then, is not just one more phenomenon. It is the scene of all phenomena. It is the place where appearances appear. It is the viewpoint from which all objects are seen as objects. The first questions that arise about it are questions about ourselves....'
>
> (Midgley, 1998: 162).

And so, despite the fact that this study has set its sights on the challenges of exploring unconscious elements in identity, I feel compelled to map contemporary thinking on consciousness to see if I can locate any crucial connections between consciousness and human identity in order to inform the challenges of unconsciousness and identity. Some of the questions, at this stage, relate to the extent to which consciousness theorists place importance on self-consciousness/introspection; to what extent a sense of self is considered to depend on linguistic activity; where consciousness is perceived to be located; and whether or not there is any link to narrative approaches in the study of self and identity.

What I find is that, while the terms 'conscious' and 'consciousness' have many different meanings (Wilkes, 1988; Humphreys, 1992; Block, 1995), there is no consensus about how to approach the problems of the self in consciousness, since 'self' too is almost a 'mythical entity' (Kenny, 1988). However, one immediate major connection seems to reside in the notion of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is a complex phenomenon and the characteristic features of it are highly contested. Locke (1975: 115), for instance, defined consciousness as the *'perception of what*

passes in a man's (sic) own mind,' which linked it squarely to self-consciousness or introspective consciousness (Seagar, 1999). Wilkes (1988), more contemporaneously, identifies the sense of self as essentially a matter of self-consciousness, while paradoxically, the self, in her terms, primarily requires consciousness. Thus, although the contemporary study of consciousness is wide-ranging and intricate, it is nearly impossible for us as human beings to contemplate a state of consciousness that is completely free of the self. Self-consciousness, then, is a matter of my thoughts having either as their content me (subject) or thoughts, desires, fears, expectations of mine. Consequently, in arguments such as those proposed by Wilkes (1988a: 32; 1988b), to have a sense of self is an exercise of self-consciousness, which interestingly, can also disrupt the continuity of the self. In this sense, self-consciousness is not a continuous stream in the Jamesian sense but a *'gappy series of eruptions'* from non-conscious or unconscious states (Strawson: 1988: 21).

It is generally accepted by philosophers and psychologists that self-consciousness involves some form of mental reflexive activity. Reflexivity or reflexiveness is a process in which one represents oneself as a person and where we become aware of our phenomenal experience and also aware of our self, which we tend to know in a third-person type of way Reflexivity is therefore crucial to our sense of identity as a human being and is clearly distinct from our awareness of our phenomenal experience, what Tolman (1932) refers to as 'raw feels' and what Dennett (1988) talks of more recently as 'qualia', and which we know in a first-person manner.

Bermúdez (1998) addresses the paradox of self-consciousness, from philosophical and psychological perspectives, in which self-consciousness is commonly defined in terms of linguistic mastery of the first-person pronoun. He argues that the paradox arises from the presumed strict interdependence between self-conscious thought and linguistic self-reference. Through his very detailed and sophisticated analysis, using philosophical naturalism, he cuts the umbilical between these and demonstrates powerfully that any explanation of fully-fledged self-consciousness must also include reference to more primitive forms of self-consciousness, which are non-conceptual and to be found, for example, in prelinguistic forms of social interaction, visual perception and bodily awareness, particularly somatic proprioception. What seems

so important within this perspective for my own arguments is not just the demonstration of how self is not solely tied to language but that these first-person, non-conceptual contents of self-consciousness, present from birth, form the basic building-blocks from which *'the fully fledged self-consciousness associated with mastery of the first-person pronoun will eventually emerge'* (p 162). Identifying such support for the notion of consciousness and identity as being fundamentally corporeal phenomena (after Sheets-Johnstone, 1998b) seemed critical to the thesis at the core of this study.

However, once we put attention on our consciousness of self, we are reminded that we can easily fall into the temptation of invoking a being within the mind which has access to the data of consciousness. Allport (1988: 160) refers to this as '*the familiar bogey of psychological theory, the homunculus'*. Part of the conundrum of consciousness and the self, then, is the question of where consciousness is located. Jaynes (1990: 144) in his seminal work claims that because we introspect we tend to look inward on an inner space, *'somewhere behind our eyes'* and we therefore assume it is in our heads and also assume it is there in others. He goes on to identify that, in reality, consciousness has no location whatever except as we imagine it. Midgley (1998: 166), too, challenges us to stop thinking of consciousness as a peculiar, isolated feature of people, where minds or consciousness are self-contained and solipsistic. She argues that consciousness *'is the crowded scene of our daily lives'* and we should not disconnect the self entirely from the world around it. *'What thinks has to be the whole person, living in a public world'* (p 165) sums up her position. While such views take us into the wider scholarship of 'relational views of the mind', within the realms of consciousness studies, however, these perspectives might be considered dangerously close to panpsychism, where consciousness is considered a fundamental feature of the universe and everything has a mental aspect (see Chalmers, 1996).

On the question of how critically the subjective world (including the development of self, self-consciousness and reflexivity) depends on language, Edelman & Tononi (2000) draw a useful but sharp distinction in the area of consciousness studies between what they term 'internalist' and 'externalist' positions on the self and subjectivity. The internalist view resonates with humanistic approaches to self (and

the notion of primary consciousness) where the emergence of a self ('true self') is created by early subjective experience gradually becoming differentiated off, with self-consciousness occurring as a result of increasingly sophisticated social and linguistic interactions. By comparison, the alternative, externalist view (linked with the notion of higher-order consciousness) holds that it is meaningless to talk about subjective responses or 'inner states' until language is acquired. Only when enough language is acquired, so the argument goes, does the self-conscious self emerge (ibid, p197/198).This must surely link with a social constructionist view of the self in which the self is inextricably linked with language and linguistic practices. Whilst Edelman & Tononi (op cit.) argue pragmatically that neither form can be pure and it is hard to tell where the construction of self begins, they proceed to say *'we can be sure the baby is constructing her own "scenes" via primary consciousness and that these scenes rapidly begin to be accompanied by... gesture, speech and language'* (p198) – a language that is likely to be metaphorical and narrative.

Thus, in the midst of this sometimes dense literature on consciousness, there was relief tinged with surprise when I located emergent references to the role of narrative, in consciousness, identity and even links to unconsciousness. Dennett (1991) characterizes human identity as an abstraction... a *'Centre of Narrative Gravity'*, while Clocksin (1998: 113) emphasizes the importance of *'taking up of a position'*, whereby the individual develops or constructs identity by locating themselves within the stories of narrative with which they engage. Jaynes (op cit), from his revolutionary perspective on consciousness as the invention of an analogue world, draws a link between consciousness and identity through narratization, which he argues is a feature of consciousness. Narratization, he says, relates to the fact that we are always seeing our 'vicarial selves' as the main figures in the stories of our lives. The 'analog I' is embedded at the centre of these stories, with time spatialized into a journey of days and years and where new situations are selectively perceived as part of this ongoing story such that the *'picture I have of myself in my life story determines how I am to act and choose'* (Boden, 1998: 12). Boden (op cit.) goes on to argue that these intentional narratives, in general, unify (describe, explain, predict) a person's biography, whilst self-ascribed narratives unify one's autobiography – and to some extent, one's life plans and future behaviour.

One way, then, of looking at narrative from a studies-of-consciousness point of view is that narrative or story provides a framework which facilitates the interpretation of subjective experience, for it is through the narratives people hold or tell about their own lives and the lives of others that they make sense of their experiences. Clocksin (1998), in the unusual context of researching into artificial intelligence and human identity, suggests that the narrative is a suitable representation for self-reflection, whether consciousness is considered as a capacity for, or a result of, self-reflection. Identity is, thus, about making explicit in narrative form the person's interpretations of the narratives with which they believe themselves to be engaged:

> 'Consciousness is the story we tell about where (context) we (character) are, and what (plot) we are doing. Who we are is part of the constructed self that is doing the telling.'
>
> (Clocksin, 1998: 115).

2.4 Unconscious – a 'tumbling ground for whimsies'!

Whilst I consider unconsciousness to be a fundamental dimension of human experience, unconscious is a deeply contested concept in the social sciences, science, medicine and psychiatry. Part of the difficulty associated with consideration of the unconscious is, of course, concerned with what it is that we are attempting to conceptualize. Once, as I have already indicated, the definite article precedes the noun 'unconscious' to become 'the unconscious', it is immediately reified and substantive, located largely within the individual and with strong associations to the psychoanalytic and latterly psychodynamic traditions. Consequently, researchers such as Westen (1998: 3) have argued for a distinction between 'unconscious processes' (cognition, affect, motivation) and 'the unconscious' in the Freudian sense, associated with unconscious motivation and ego defence mechanisms. Thus, a current distinction is drawn between the cognitive unconscious and the psychoanalytic unconscious (Kihlstrom, 1987, 1990) and, although they overlap somewhat, the study of cognitive unconscious processes is considered to be largely outside the psychodynamic unconscious.

Consequently, whilst historically, within psychology in particular, and the social sciences more generally, the importance of an emotional or unconscious realm has not readily found mainstream respect, there is an emergent academic acceptability

and interest in researching such related areas as intuition, (Anderson, 1998), consciousness (Newman, 2001), implicit memory (Schacter, 1996) cognitive neuroscience (Lane et al, 2000) emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and subliminal perception (Erdelyi, 1994) etc, many of which have unconscious (or non-conscious, strictly speaking) dimensions and also have direct applicability within education.

The centrepiece of Freud's (1915) early theory was his theory of the unconscious; it was the underside of human experience that was situated in the unconscious. Within the unconscious, hidden from view, the prohibited and primitive wishes, fantasies and motives, impulses and instincts were considered to exist, propelling people to act for better or worse. In the stereotypic notions of Freudianism, these unconscious forces were seen as having the potential to wreak havoc with society if acted upon. Individuals therefore had to ban these impulses from conscious awareness through the repression of memories, events, people and experience associated with these urges. A lot of life therefore would have to be relegated to the unconscious, such that it would either be 'forgotten' or 'unknown'.

Within the psychoanalytic tradition, then, the Freudian unconscious was viewed by Freud (1920/1956) as not simply mental processes occurring outside awareness but as a dynamic repository in which *'drives, instincts, wishes, and other mental contents so anxiety-laden and full of emotion (are)... deliberately kept from awareness (i.e. repressed).*' (Bornstein & Masling, 1998: xiii). Right from the outset, Freud's concept of the unconscious was controversial and has been considered by many (largely experimentalists wedded to a positivist-empiricist philosophy of science) to have been accepted too uncritically, particularly by many in the therapeutic community. One of the most scathing opponents from the beginning was William James (1950) who systematically argued that unconscious mental states did not exist, seeing proponents of unconscious processes as propounding a *'tissue of confusion'* (p172) which James considered as creating a dangerous *'tumbling ground for whimsies'* (p163) with its potential to undermine psychology's potential claims as a science:

> 'To believe the contrary would make any definite science of psychology impossible.' (p174).

Cushman (1995) argues that Freud could not have located the 'unknown' inside the individual and called it 'the unconscious' unless he took for granted the belief that everything outside the individual could be scientifically quantified, calculated, and thus finally understood (p112). Freud, by the same token, could never have interiorized the unknown unless he believed that there was a psychological interior within each individual. Some recent writers, most notably Lacan (1987), argue that Freud' work implied that the coherent unified self is a fiction, constructed out of absence, *'an unspoken collusion with the unspoken demands and desires of others'* (p113).

Freud, according to Jones (1955) considered his most important work to be on the *Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he proposed the principles by which the unconscious operated. In particular he distinguished between primary and secondary process reasoning. Primary process was the language (mental activity) of the unconscious and involved such activities as wish fulfilment, displacement, association and, importantly, symbolic representation. Thus, in Freud's view, such primary principles accounted for dreams but also psychopathological symptoms and behaviour and continually undermined attempts at conscious rational thinking (Epstein, 1994). Primary process mental activity was the foundation of all mental activity and was contrasted with secondary process which was considered to be the more logical, rational, realistic form of reasoning which, of course, for Freud was only the tip of the iceberg. *'The only hope of thinking rationally...was to make the unconscious conscious which was the aim of psychoanalysis'* (Epstein, 1994: 709) and also later Jungian analysis.

Whereas Freud in many ways was preoccupied with the demands that the body, as carrier of the psyche placed on the unconscious, Jung cut loose from this constraint, viewing the psyche as part of a universal and transcendental reality (Morgan, 1986). The human psyche is part of the 'collective unconscious' that transcends the limits of space and time. Jung dematerialized our understanding of the psyche, '*linking mind to mind and mind to nature'* (p223). One of the key features of Jung's psychology is the fascinating concept of 'archetype' which literally means *'original pattern'.* Archetypes are considered to structure thought also to have *'inherited forms and ideas'* that acquire content in the course of an individual's life as personal experience is taken up

in these forms. Archetype plays a critical role in linking the individual to the collective unconscious.

Associated with the more gradual paradigmatic shift in the social sciences, which included a greater acceptance of interpretive methods, the 1990s took an upward turn into the current research phase in which new methods have been developed (e.g. Merikle & Reingold's (1992) direct/indirect approach to assessing unconscious influences). This turn in many senses radically demystified the unconscious by placing it more centrally in the domain of mainstream cognitive science. It has now been more readily accepted by the psychological research community that not only do stimuli perceived or remembered without awareness influence behaviour but they also produce responses that are qualitatively different from those produced by stimuli consciously perceived and remembered. Up until this point, studies of the 'cognitive unconscious' would have disclaimed any association with the Freudian concept of the unconscious but gradually, studying unconscious cognitive processes has led the way to consideration of affect and motivation, key drivers within the psychoanalytic tradition, to the point now that there are those who subscribe to the view that the cognitive unconscious and psychoanalytic unconscious are related and commensurable (Epstein, 1994; Westen, 1998: 5). And so, whilst empirical research on unconscious has been largely claimed within the cognitive domain of psychology where, for example, the cognition-emotion relationship has been studied (Bornstein & D'Agostonio,1994; Music, 2001: 7), some researchers have tried to disentangle the relationship between the cognitive unconscious and the psychoanalytic unconscious (notably, Epstein, op. cit.).

Presently trends in the psychological study of unconscious are focusing on (i) the sociobiology of the unconscious, (ii) neuropsychological correlates of unconscious processes (iii) testing the limits of the unconscious (iv) a life span perspective on the unconscious (v) the conscious-unconscious relationship and (vi) the unconscious as a unifying concept in psychology (Bornstein & Masling,1998: xix-xii).

If I were to relate this study within any of the above categories of study of the unconscious, it would probably be most closely associated with (iv)-(vi) above. In this case, however, the concern will be to explore aspects of life-span perspective, the relationship between conscious and unconscious and the potential for

unconscious dimensions to have a central rather than marginal role within the narratives of teachers as expressed through arts-based media.

In addition, various researchers (Uleman & Bargh, 1989; Rakover, 1993) have been investigating what occurs as unconscious material is made conscious, focusing particularly on the process rather than the content. Whilst not strictly focusing on what occurs at the interface, the method used in this inquiry is to encourage symbolic form as an aid to exploring potentially unconscious material. As such, it must pay some attention to the experiential process that seems to occur, as well as the content of the symbolic expressions, and what is associated with them by the participants.

2.5 Linking the cognitive and psychodynamic unconscious

Until recently, many experimental psychologists remained unconvinced regarding the very existence of unconscious mental processes, resistant to empirical evidence demonstrating that perception, learning and memory can occur without conscious awareness.

Epstein (1973, 1994) proposed a model which made explicit possible connections between cognitive psychology and concepts such as the unconscious according to Freudian theory, which he termed cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST). In attempting to integrate the two apparently opposing models of mental activity, he drew on theories of the 'new' or 'cognitive unconscious' (Kihlstrom, 1990) which hold that most information-processing actually occurs automatically and effortlessly outside of awareness. He then develops the argument that modern ideas of unconscious processing relate in substantive ways to psychodynamic principles (p710). Cognitive-experiential self-theory, therefore, emphasizes two parallel, interactive modes of information-processing, one of which is rational and the other of which is emotionally driven, both of which operate by different rules. Such an approach comes close to my personal understandings of unconscious and it was such a relief to discover Epstein (1994) arguing for two fundamentally different but interrelated ways of knowing, one labelled experiential, intuitive, automatic, natural, non-conscious and narrative and the other analytic, deliberative, verbal and rational, each associated with a different kind of information-processing in the brain.

Metaphorical conflicts between the head and the heart, according to Epstein (op cit.), are therefore conflicts between the experiential mode of processing, which is intimately bound up with emotion and the rational mode which is considered to be relatively affect-free. Schemas consist primarily of generalizations derived from emotionally significant experiences. At its lower level, the experiential system effortlessly processes information; at its higher levels and, in conjunction with the rational system, it is a source of intuitive wisdom and creativity.

> 'Although it represents events primarily concretely and imagistically, it is capable of abstraction in the form of...metaphors and narratives.'
>
> (Epstein, 1994: 105).

According to Epstein, one of the basic ways to produces changes in the experiential system is by *'communicating with the experiential system in its own medium, namely imagery and narratives'* (Epstein, 1994: 130).

In support of Epstein's work, Fox (1995: 798) drew attention to the ways in which neuroscientific research (e.g. Galin, 1976) at the time furthered the premise for a 'dual (and duelling) cognition' in which the human brain operated with parallel processes of cognition, loosely associated with the faculties of each cerebral hemisphere *'wired for varying levels of consciousness and fluctuating degrees of more or less rational processes.'* (p799). Brand (1995), on the other hand, whilst considering Epstein's (1994) model generally misguided in its attempts at integration still found the arguments for rational and emotional modes of processing compelling and relatively well-established.

What seems particularly vital for this current study is Epstein's (op. cit.) references to the role of narrative and image (mental representation) in cognitive-experiential self-theory and the issues of language that are raised. The experiential system encodes reality in concrete images, metaphors and narratives whilst the rational system encodes reality in abstract symbols, words and numbers. Narratives, therefore, are assumed to appeal to the experiential system because of their emotional engagement and because they represent events similar to how they are experienced – *'experiencing is believing'* (ibid. p711). Bruner (1986; 1987) with others (McAdams, 1985; Sarbin, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988) had already identified narrative thought in opposition to analytic thought as an important form of mental

representation. According to Epstein's (op. cit.) dual model, people hold constructs about the self and the world in both the rational and experiential systems. Those within the rational system are referred to as beliefs and within the experiential system, implicit beliefs or what are termed schemata, derived from emotionally significant past experience. Thus while the rational system *'operates primarily in the medium of language'* (p715), the experiential system is more highly responsive to pictures images and symbolic representations.

2.6 Symbolization and the language of unconscious: the 'mythic mode'

Moving to the question of the 'language' of unconscious, according to Ellingham (2002), Freud's concept of the unconscious places various kinds of mental activity in various positions inside a 'fictive apparatus'. In Rycroft's terms (1979), Freud's primary process mental activity is *'governed by a set of rules in which images, not words, fuse, symbolize or replace one another.'* This can be related to Cassirer's (1955) *'mythic mode'*, considered as a non-discursive mode of thought which is the essential of dream, fantasy and *'unconscious ideation,'* which Freud himself discovered and described as a primitive form of ideation whose:

> 'products are images charged with meanings, but the meanings remain implicit, images in which many meanings may be concentrated, many ideas telescoped and interfused and incompatible emotions simultaneously expressed.'
>
> (Langer, 1949).

This is a stage of sense-making prior to secondary process reasoning in which *'diffuse sensorimotor, bodily sense-making of a situation becomes enshrined in a visual or auditory image'.* (Ellingham, 2002: 23). Resolution of psychological problems in this mode involves invoking the bodily and non-discursive modes of sense-making of the past, facilitating their rise to awareness and thereafter transforming such experience into discursive language - what Gendlin (1961) eschewed as further symbolizing (or experiencing) any 'unfinished business' in the continual process of self-formation.

2.7 Researching unconsciousness

With regard to the problem of unconsciousness in qualitative research, the paradox for Walsh (1996: 377), like myself, lies in the conundrum that *'if aspects of lived experience are unconscious to an engaged participant'*, then how can it be made reflexive? He sees this type of approach as involving the explorations of *'horizons through which experience is understood'* beyond surface understandings into the deeper layers of meaning where *'interpretation involves discovery of something that initially was undisclosed to all collaborators in the research project'* (p380). The trouble for Walsh (op cit.), and one which I have encountered throughout this research exploration, is how to create a 'clearing' (after Heidegger, 1962) or engage in a process of 'bracketing' (after Husserl, 1962), in which I step out of my *'web of assumptions'* or *'unconscious pre-understandings'* and thereby make them explicit in order to understand more clearly participants' experience.

In research terms then, unconsciousness can be conceptualized variously and methods to be used to unearth unconscious must be apposite. Accordingly, the source of unconscious material may be internally and subjectively located or, conversely, be considered contextual (or collective) in which case the social, historical and political influences require scrutiny. Whatever the case, methodological challenges that arise are that unconsciousness can either be revealed through language to expose implicit structures and if so research methods must rely on words and the interpretation of words. Or, on the other hand, although language reveals, it may also conceal, in which case unconsciousness may be considered primarily non-verbal. Thus, non-verbal data, particularly embodied experience, must be incorporated within the research process in order to make sense of undisclosed, unverbalized meaning. In this case, and in line with the arguments above, unconsciousness is to a high degree considered to remain distinct from language in the form of words.

CHAPTER 3: IDENTITY, TEACHER IDENTITY AND NARRATIVE

3.1 Psychological approaches to self and identity

Before tackling the challenges of narrative approaches to self and identity, I feel it important to acknowledge briefly a number of those comfortingly familiar psychological approaches to self that have emerged within the discipline of psychology during the last century. There are basically four approaches all of which have potential importance to the study of the self and or identity: (i) social psychological; (ii) humanistic psychology; (iii) psychoanalytic/psychodynamic; and (iv) social constructivist:-

(i) the social psychological approach has tended to fall within the experimental and developmental paradigms, focusing on the development of a sense of self (self-perception) and various aspects of it, through observation, self-report, animal studies and measurement (e.g. Bem, 1972; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). Despite a few interesting, unusual studies, this approach to self and identity is largely unsatisfying, fragmented and partial as the major body of work attests;

(ii) the humanistic approach does reflect more adequately the complexities of human self and identity by locating and attempting to capture the unique, subjective nature of self from a phenomenological perspective (with Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1972) and being two of the most renowned proponents). Although the range of research approaches is wide and widening (also through counselling and psychotherapy research), the dominant methods would be qualitative, including auto-biographical and case-study methods. Thus, there is an emergent relationship between humanistic and narrative approaches (Etherington, 2000);

(iii) the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches represent a huge spectrum of models of the self and identity but with the central notion of behaviour and actions being unconsciously motivated. Concern to focus on individual 'depth meanings' links these approaches to narrative methods. Although Freud (1856-1939) and Jung (1875-1961) are the most celebrated

among proponents, one of the most influential theorists on identity and its development through psychosocial stages across the lifespan, must be that of Erikson (1959). With Erikson's view of identity, as a reorganization of *'the 'early' into a pattern which connects the individual's past to the perceived present and anticipated future'* (McAdams, 1985: 8) there is an immediate connection to narrative psychology. In addition, with his twin emphasis on 'psycho' and 'social', the internal and external, this connection is secured. However, despite the early beginnings of narrative approaches within this paradigm, the lack of support for such strongly internalist views are borne out in the paucity of narrative research within this orientation – the exceptions being that of McAdams, 1985 and Fraser, 1989.

(iv) Finally, social constructivist views, exemplified in narrative approaches to the study of identity, place high precedence on the interconnection between 'self' and 'social structures', particularly the crucial relationship between self and 'language'. This approach has little time for the 'self-as-entity' that can be described and is more focused on how the self is theorized in everyday discourse (Potter & Witherell, 1987). Narrative research method, from the social constructivist perspective, therefore is considerably more interested in explicating the methods of constructing the self.

It is in the interface, between the humanistic/psychodynamic approaches, with their relative concentration on the 'inwardness' and 'core self' of the subject, and contemporary social constructivist approaches to identity, influenced by the post-modern vision of the self and embedded in language, that the main paradox of this study is located. On becoming aware of this tension, I needed to determine whether I was simply bound to be 'the eternal romantic,' deluded by outmoded notions of 'inwardness', and that, in fact, without language we are as nothing. Right from the outset, as I followed my gut instinct that these positions were overly-polarized, I reckoned there must be some point of contact – a meeting-place that somehow could accommodate these two possibilities, despite their apparently antagonistic views of the world.

3.2 Narrative approaches to identity

> 'Numberless are the world's narratives.'
>
> Barthés (1994: 93)

Narrative approaches to identity comprise a new perspective deriving from the post-metaphysical and post-positivist paradigm which has been influential in many discussions in the social sciences. Since the 1960s, cognitive psychologists such as Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990) have advocated the importance of narrative and story in creating meaning throughout the human development cycle. Narrative therapies have also recently become popular as forms of therapeutic intervention wherein clients are encouraged not only to tell stories of their lives and problems but also to re-story (White & Epston, 1990; Epston & White, 1992; Freedman & Combs, 1996). There are many definitions of narrative. Toolan (1988: 7), for example, offers what he considers to be a minimalist definition of narrative as a *'perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events'*. The main point or 'narrative principle' presents a challenging view of the human being to those generally encountered in traditional psychology. Narrative approaches present a more holistic and humanistic image of the self. Story-telling is put at the centre of human activity. Sarbin (1986: 3), for example, sees narrative as being coterminous with story where:

> 'a story is a symbolized account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension. The story has a beginning, middle and an ending…(it is)..held together by recognizable patterns of events called plots. Central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions.'

Sarbin (op.cit: 9) defines narrative as *'a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated.'* Narrating, then, is viewed as a way of retrieving the self. Kerby (1991), for example, sees personal identity as depending upon the continuity of meaningful experience in this life He considers that we have no transcendental standpoint from which the past may be seen without the interference of subjectivity (Kerby, 1991: 31) and thus, narration can be conceived as the telling (in whatever medium, though especially language) of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed – the story or plot of the narrative.

McAdams (1985; 1997) adopts a life-story developmental theory of identity whereby identity is viewed as a narrative construction, in which we *are* the stories we tell. Individuals create a personalized life myth, a unique 'heroic myth', which can be traced from infancy to old age. Approached through twin questions of identity - 'who am I?' and 'how can I fit into an adult world? , the problem of identity is '*the problem of unity and purpose in human lives'* (1985: 3), where we try to make *'something good of our lives in our own time, place and ethos.*' (1997: 6). Any problem of identity, then, is the problem of arriving at a life story that makes sense within a socio-historical matrix. One of the aspects of McAdams' work which attracts me is his recognition of unconscious dimensions to our 'myth-making' both in the fact that *'the story is inside of us'* but also that it *'may be remade in the secrecy of our own minds, both conscious and unconscious'* and :

> 'in moments of great insight, parts of our story may become suddenly conscious…(and)…appear to be self-defining phenomena.'
>
> (McAdams,1997: 12)

An individual's story, by these arguments, has power to tie together past, present and future in order to provide unity and purpose.

> 'Stories can join the world of thought and feeling, and they give special voice to the feminine side of human experience – to the power of emotion, intuition, and relationship in human lives.'
>
> (Witherell & Noddings, 1991: 4)

Bruner (1986) refers to stories being composed of dual landscapes – a 'landscape of action' and a 'landscape of consciousness'. The landscape of action embodies events that are linked together in a sequence through the temporal dimension past, present, future - and according to specific plots. In such a manner, the narrator presents the reader with a perspective on the thematic unfolding of events across time. (see Epston & White, 1992: 124).

The landscape of consciousness, therefore, is significantly constituted by the interpretation of the characters in the story, and also by those of the reader who enters the consciousness of these characters. The landscape of consciousness features the meanings derived by characters and readers through reflection on the events and plots as they unfold through the landscape of action in which perceptions,

thoughts, speculation, realizations and conclusions dominate this landscape, such that:

> 'these stories are inevitably framed by our dominant cultural knowledges.'
>
> (Epston & White 1992: 124).

From this perspective, they are not about discoveries regarding the 'nature' of persons and of relationships, but are constructed knowledges that specify a particular strain of personhood e.g. in the West, these establish a highly individual and gender distinct specification for *'ways of being in the world'* (ibid: 125).

For Hampl (1996: 209), memoir is the intersection of narration and reflection, of story-telling and essay-writing. Re-visioning serves a personal function in that the memoirist engages in a new relationship with the self of the past. Norquay (1993) describes it similarly *'as doing homework on ourselves'*, working to reconstruct memory, re-interrogating one's construction of it – and in so doing begin to see oneself in a different way. Not so much contesting what happened, more beginning to understand the 'here and now' differently by probing the 'then and there' realizing that self-image may be masking some painful truths:

> 'We only store in memory images of value. The value may be lost over the passage of time....And of course we cleave to things because they posses heavy negative charges.'
>
> (Hampl, 1996: 270).

3.3 Teacher identity: a 'continuing site of struggle'?

> 'It may well not be very productive to talk about professional identity in an essentialized way. Clearly teachers inhabit multiple professional identities.'
>
> (Sachs, 2001: 155)

Whilst, some considerable study was undertaken on the lives and careers of teachers in the 80s and 90s (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Louden, 1991; Goodson, 1992, 1994), such research in education was considered 'counterculture' in its sponsorship of *'the teacher's voice'* (Goodson, 1994: 31) in schooling. This life study work and narrative demonstrated evidence of a fundamental personal dimension to teaching and that both social and personal biography affects the practice and professional identity of the teacher. Nias (1989a), for example, suggests that, although notions of 'self' and

personal identity are much used in educational research and theory, critical engagement with concepts of the 'individual teacher' and the 'self' was at the time seriously lacking. Some fifteen years later, this remains a field where research and theory are scarce.

Some of the most important teacher life history studies in relation to the current inquiry were those by Goodson (1981; 1983) who argued that the actions of teachers could not be separated from their personal socio-historical past and Woods (1986) who reinforced the importance of understanding how teachers' early life experiences affected their careers and strategies. However, I also am inspired by the work of Casey (1988, 1992) in America, who took a feminist stance, in challenging conventional instrumental views on such issues as teacher attrition through using life history narratives. By placing teachers' own understandings at the centre of the research agenda, life history research was affecting the power relations in educational research. Using autobiographical research Grumet (1988: xv) too argued that women *'can separate neither self nor life from theory formulation'* thereby contesting *'the generalizations and methodology of social science'* regarding what counts as knowledge.

More recent research and discourse, however, on teacher identity has tended to focus on the dominance of external factors, (Reynolds, 1996; Woods, Jeffrey & Troman, 1997; Woods 2001; Keltchermans & Ballet 2002) particularly socio-political (Sachs, 2000), in the definition of professional identity. Research on teachers' selves has therefore wrestled with issues which arise from the nature (i) of the relationship between social structures and individual agency; and (ii) between notions of a socially constructed, and therefore contingent and ever-made 'self' and a 'self' with dispositions, attitudes and behavioural responses which are durable and relatively sensible.

Sachs (2001), for example, suggests that professional identity is rarely problematized and she defines how within the current orthodoxy it is *'a set of attributes that are imposed upon the teaching profession either by outsiders or members of the teaching profession.'* (p153). In her analysis of current teaching conditions in Australia, she identifies how under competing dominant discourses (i.e. democratic and managerial professionalism), teachers move between these professional

identities, since identities are not fixed. In line with Maclure (1993: 312), Sachs contends that identity should *'not be seen as a stable entity - something that people have - but as something they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and the contexts in which they operate.'* Thus, while professional identity seems to be a key factor in becoming and being a teacher, clearly teachers inhabit multiple professional identities and talking about professional development in an essentialized way is not considered to be productive since:

> It is the collective stories rather than the individual stories that provide the political impetus for ongoing action.'
>
> (Casey, 1993)

In this more contemporary view of identity, professional identity is seen as *'an organizing principle'* in teachers' lives or a *'continuing site of struggle'* (Maclure,1993: 313) located in a particular social and cultural space. The emphasis in such analyses has tended to focus on the professional dimension of teachers' lives and the powerful shaping patterns of political ideologies and policies with only minimal exploration of the power of individual self narratives to shape the nature of what it is to be a teacher in a particular context.

Taking the more personal perspective, Pinar (1988) refers to the *'architecture of the self',* which consists of the contribution of many aspects of the private existential person, such as beliefs, dispositions, feelings, values, guiding images, principles whether explicit, implicit, tacit or intuitive. Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi (1992: 60) see such architecture of the self as *'deeply personal'* comprising what the private person brings to the public act of teaching in the classroom. They are interested in understanding the biographic formation of teachers' knowledge, not just the substance and structure but also the process. Butt et al (op cit) view the private person as significantly shaped both by experiences of context and situation and also how a person acts in a situation, and thus emphasizes the biographic nature of experiential learning. Past experiences, they consider, are also crucial to this as they describe *'those crucial interactive episodes in which new lines of individual and collective activity are forged in which new aspects of the self are brought into being.'* (Butt et al, 1992: 60). Thus what authors such as these and Kelchtermans (1993a; 1993b; 1996) do is to provide some counterbalance to the importance of the personal and personal agency in conceptualizing teacher identity in the face of a

situation where increasingly *'individualism is primarily a shortcoming, not a strength, not a possibility'* (Hargreaves, 1994: 171). And so, not only is there an unhelpfully sharp disjuncture drawn between the personal and professional in our current conceptualization of teacher identity but also, there remains a paucity of understanding on the potential role and impact of unconscious elements within such personal and professional dimensions of teachers' identities and contexts.

3.4 Narrative and teacher identity

> '...story and narrative are central to the kind of work that those in teaching and helping professions do – (it) stems from our experiences in teaching, particularly in the preparation of teachers and counsellors to reflect upon their practice.'
>
> (Witherell & Noddings, 1993: 2)

In this quote, Witherell & Noddings (op cit.) identify the centrality of personal narratives in educational practice arguing that it is a natural progression from those encouragements to 'reflective practice' (after Schön,1987) that form such a central maxim within teacher (and indeed counsellor) development. While teasing out the relationship between reflexivity and narrative would seem to be an extremely valuable area of scholarship, on the face of it, what seems to be a shared goal is how engagement in life stories can penetrate cultural barriers and help professionals discover the power of the self.

Once again, the tension regarding the purpose of understanding teacher identity through narrative study is evident. Should it be sufficient that the focus of narrative is on individual teacher illumination or should it have a wider socio-political agenda concerning itself with collective or system change? Gergen & Gergen (1988), for example, make a case that the teaching profession should at both the individual and collective level acknowledge the importance of professional self-narratives. They argue that since teachers themselves construct these self-narratives which relate to their social, political and professional agendas, they are *'a glue for a collective professional identity'* (quoted in Sachs, 2001: 158). In a similar vein, Casey's (1993) life history work with women teachers attests that it is indeed the collective stories that provide the political impetus for ongoing action *'although the political is*

everywhere, it is not diffuse, for everyone is involved but not in the same way.' (p158).

By contrast, van Maanen (1994) and others employ narrative and biographic approaches to address the theme of teacher personal identity. In van Maanen's view, teacher personal identity can be brought to self-awareness through narrative self-reflection. Self-knowledge from this perspective is the game-point. Self-knowledge not only assumes that one can establish one's own personal identity by means of stories, but also assumes that one can be accountable narratively for how one has developed as a person – for how one has become what one has become. van Maanen (1994:159) goes on to suggest that, by means of stories, teachers justify the manner in which their character, wishes and interests have grown and changed as a result of past circumstances, decisions, and formative experiences in specific circumstances. Self-knowledge therefore in his terms is related to the search for one's own life story.

In a similar vein, Nias (1989b), researching primary school teachers' self-image, makes a distinction between the personal and professional elements of teachers' lives and identities, arguing for recognition of the former as being crucial to teachers in their working lives. The majority of her teachers linked 'being a teacher' with 'being yourself' in the classroom which for them was associated with a feeling of 'wholeness' in their lives (p182). By 1996, Nias extended this perspective by arguing that teachers can grow personally and develop professionally through making a narrative whole of their lives, identifying the chapters and sub-plots within it and reflecting upon the significance of what has been said, left unsaid or never experienced. (1996: 304). In this sense, telling stories, once again, is considered akin to the search for self and self-understanding. What is interesting in relation to the current inquiry is that these teachers' self-narratives are often tacit and that what may need to be elaborated through narrative inquiry is the level below the taken-for-granted.

Although there is a proliferating research literature on narrative and teacher identity, there remains relatively little investigation of this deeper psychological structure. Two aspects of teacher research that seem likely to have some explanatory value in

this exploration of unconscious in teacher identity are critical incidents and the role of emotion:

Critical incidents

There has been a growing interest in 'critical phases' or critical incident analysis in teacher life history research (Walker, 1976, Measor, 1985, Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985; Tripp, 1993). Critical incidents are defined as: *'key events in an individual's life and around which pivotal decisions revolve'* (Measor,1985: 61), which lead to specific actions and have consequences for identity. Such defining moments in teacher research are similar to what McAdams (1985: 133) terms 'nuclear episodes' in the narrative genre, where:

> 'As we construct our identities through narrative, we confer upon certain experiences in our lives a salience or centrality which denotes that they are very, very special. These incidents may be highly positive or negative. They may mark perceived transformations of self – identity turning-points, or they may affirm perceived continuity and sameness.'

These are clearly personally meaningful moments. However, in teacher research, the focus tends to have been on how external professional factors impinge on teachers' identities and actions rather than, conversely, on the impact of personal life events, both conscious and unconscious. For instance, Measor (1985: 61) argues, in her study on beginning teachers, that these 'critical incidents' are useful to study because they reveal *'like a flashbulb the major choice and change times in people's lives'* and can also involve a discovery about parts of oneself perhaps previously unknown.

Emotions

> 'A significant and ongoing part of a teacher is the experiencing of strong emotions.'
>
> (Flores & Day, 2002: 3)

Teaching calls for 'emotional labour' according to Hargreaves (1998) which enables teachers to manage the challenges they face. However there is relatively little understanding of the impact of the emotional lives of teachers on their identity outside the school. Thus, although there is a growing recognition of the need to address the emotional aspects of teachers' lives and that we ignore emotions at our

peril (Noddings, 1996), teacher biography and life history have not significantly addressed this. Inside the school, Sutton (2000) found that love as a social relationship, care, job satisfaction and joy, pride, excitement and pleasure in pupils' progress and achievements are among the most commonly cited positive emotions. Teachers also inevitably experience negative emotions. For instance, Keltchermans (1996) reported on Belgian teachers' feelings of vulnerability engendered when professional identity and moral integrity are questioned while, amongst English primary teachers, Jeffrey and Woods (1996) found feelings of professional uncertainty, confusion, inadequacy, anxiety, mortification and doubt as responses in the face of inspection. A mode of research however that only accesses the rational, conscious and familiar professional aspects of the teacher's emotional world cannot be sufficient to a full understanding of teachers' identities. The power of turbulent emotions, past and present in teaching also (as in counselling) has the potential to elicit restricted responses in the classroom *'based on old patterns of emotional distress and thinking'* (Leitch & Day, 2000: 187). Nias (1996: 305) also warns us that teachers:

> 'Without feeling, without freedom to 'face themselves', to be whole persons in the classroom, they implode, explode or walk away.'

3.5 Women and narrative – 'when we dead awaken: writing a re-vision'

> 'Along with the sense of personal authority arises a sense of voice – in its earliest form, a 'still small voice' to which a woman begins to attend rather than the long familiar external voices that have directed her life. This interior voice has become for us, the hallmark of women's emergent sense of agency and control.'
>
> (Belenky et al, 1986: 68)

Is it not ironic that I came to this territory towards the end in my exploration of the many landscapes of literature that have bounded the centre-spine of this thesis? I am aware of feeling shaky at this point in the realization that I may have missed the whole framing of this thesis, that its concern is not so much on the impersonal 'teachers' identity' but on women teachers' identities, and that the gendered nature of this is not simply an adjectival add-on but core. However, at this point, at six a.m.

on this Sunday morning, I also know that I do not have time to re-frame the whole work but must accept that what I am recording is my journey, however discontinuous, contradictory or unsatisfying in places. Perhaps, more importantly, maybe, I have arrived in a place that I have been searching for – a place of companionship for my own voice. Of course, I have visited this territory before, reviewing, quoting and indeed having sympathy with the feminist theorists, with their attention to women's voice, authority, ways of knowing (Belenky et al, 1986; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and the 'ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Flanagan & Jackson, 1987). But paradoxically, I did not quite 'get it', reminding me forcibly:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.
>
> T S Eliot Four Quartets (1942)

Somehow, until now I have not realized that what binds my writing and my thinking is my continuing deference to 'procedural knowledge'. I have had a sudden realization, that emotional, scary moment of insight this morning on re-reading some of Plath Helle's (1991: 48-66) chapter on *'Reading women's autobiographies'*, where she refers to *'the reality of the relationship in our intellectual work'*. I now realize that the earlier conventional sections of the literature, in their breathless, seemingly impartial style, placing you, the reader, into a detached observer and with my voice trying to weave its place into the crevices, is just what I do and have always done in my professional life. That is, to feel that I must prove myself first according to the dominant norms and conventions *before* I have earned the right to have my voice and allow it truly and uniquely to express itself. Of course, as I hear the inner retorts, I have done this repeatedly, but unawarely and oftentimes apologetically.

In a sense, I have turned some sort of personal corner in this narrative journey, where some scales have finally fallen off my eyes and I begin to sense how disconnected I have been from female epistemology and how so much of my sense of professional and intellectual isolation is bound up in my location in the patriarchal academy. Before I rush off too quickly to apologize to my readers for all I have

written before, I want to recognize that this trait, too, is part of my feminine biography which is in itself so deeply embedded.

What may have jaundiced my vision was my early distrust of feminism with its commitment to reason and autonomy as a standpoint for knowing and, typically mistrustful of self-reflective procedures (e.g. see Cocks, 1985). This did not reasonably fit with my experience and I did not find easy access outside 'ungendered' therapeutic ways of knowing to a discourse that would support what I did know. I guess I stopped looking and what is now emerging from this new *'structure of insight'* are stirrings of what is meant by a narrative sense of self and how this narrative power, as it evolves (for me and others) contributes to feminism. I begin to resonate with current feminist critique of knowledge in which the silencing of the other (the feminine) is described as a denial of otherness:

> 'Teaching from narrative...models the process of recognizing the other. The other is within me consciously and unconsciously..., when I seismographically test the truth of an idea against the pulse of experience...'
>
> (Plath Helle, 1991: 52).

While I do not wish to claim too much at this point (as I surely know how easily fallen scales have a tendency to slide seamlessly back into eyes in off-guard moments), I feel I can re-turn and re-value the findings and methodologies employed by, for example, Belenky and her colleagues (1986) for this study. What I think is exemplary is the way in which they attend closely to the relationship between language and epistemology in the narratives of women's lives and how their findings reveal the apparent disjuncture between 'separate' and 'connected' ways of knowing, where *'more women than men tip towards connected knowing'* (p.102-03). I suppose I begin to see the text of this thesis being more clearly multi-layered and that this in itself is reflective of where I am positioned. Suddenly my 'separatist style of knowing' seems so evident in the various preceding literature sections, conforming as they do more closely to expectations of what external authority sounds like and frequently smacking of what masculine authority sounds like. By contrast, my 'connected voice of knowing' that presumes an intimacy, a sharing of self and other, shows itself in the cracks of the literature and is calling out in the

autoethnography – the latter now beginning to make more sense in the overall destination of this narrative and paradoxical journey.

As I move forward to re-edit the next chapter, I take courage from Plath Helle's words (1993: 54) where she talks of connected knowing as aiming to create continuity between the so-called *'private language of self-reflection and the formal expectations of public speech.*'; and how we can recognize this register in its references to the self, references to the vocabulary of feeling and a '*voice where there are echoes of internal dialogue brought out into the open.'*

3.6 Narrative and unconscious

I could not easily locate any well-articulated theoretical model of the role of unconscious in narrative or, indeed the reverse, the role of narrative in unconscious. In searching for a link between the concepts of narrative, with its predominant emphasis on consciousness, articulation and language, I came across the concept of the 'narrative unconscious', which is an emerging concept in narrative inquiry, referred to by Freeman (2002).

What I eventually uncovered is an ongoing contemporary debate on the role of unconscious (or nonconscious) processes in narrative and autobiography. This is best characterized by the argument sparked off by Freeman's recent essay (2002) *Charting the Narrative Unconscious: Cultural Memory and the Challenge of Autobiography* which has been challenged by Mancuso (2002) and Raskin (2002) respectively. Through separate commentaries, they both contest Freeman's (op cit.) perspective on the 'narrative unconscious.' Freeman holds that through some type of complex process, human experience is both individually and socially constituted, in which the unconscious is located within the culture rather than within individual minds. Freeman (op cit) suggests that the collective or 'narrative unconscious' functions analogously to the personal unconscious which contains cultural memories that all members of a particular society share. She also holds that it is possible to make *'the narrative unconscious conscious through the work of autobiography'* (p190) - which strikes a chord that harmonizes with my own. Freeman therefore is not so much concerned with understanding the private, secretive dimension of personal life but more with the uncognized aspects of our own histories and cultures

that have been *'bequeathed to us by virtue of our status as historical beings of a specific* sort' (Freeman: 2002: 200) and that have yet to be incorporated into our narrative.

Mancuso (op cit.), however, holding a deeply social constructionist view of narrative takes issue with Freeman's discussions of unconscious functioning, suggesting that the author still views the concept of the unconscious too much from a Freudian perspective with the emphasis on its being an 'entity' or 'place' in which 'memories' are locked by 'repression' and prevented from escaping by 'resistance" (p219). Mancuso prefers the concepts of 'non-conscious' or 'off-awareness' processing in which *'we constantly RE-member our selves as we create self-guiding narratives'* (p219) rather than reaching into a place called 'memory' or 'unconscious' to retrieve the self-narratives that a person will create (p218).

By contrast, Raskin's (op cit.) rejoinder is much more positively disposed to Freeman's analysis of 'narrative unconscious' commending the author for extending the scope of narrative within psychology, but, at the same time, suggesting that Freeman's cause would benefit from communicating about the narrative unconscious in less abstract and more operationally defined terms. Raskin uses Freeman's discourse to stimulate issues which are in large part relevant to this study. Raskin sees a similarity between the narrative unconscious and social constructionism in that they both stress how unexamined (or in Freeman's terms 'uncognized') much of our lives are at a variety of levels.

3.7 Beginnings of psychoanalytic narrative?

> "Story-telling provides the basic material of psychoanalysis.'
>
> (Siegel & Weinberger, 1998: 71)

In a psychoanalytic sense, stories patients tell were considered to be emblematic of their personality and ways of constructing the world. Research which capitalized on the power of story-telling, using evocative pictures, led to the development of the clinical tool, the Thematic Apperception Test, (TAT) and more recent work on personal scripts by Demorest, 1995. Both of these draw on the canonical construct of the 'complex' associated with Freud (1963) and Jung (1969) which is considered

to be a distinctive and consistent pattern that defines an individual's personality or 'grammar of interpretation' and which has deep emotional significance.

Freud considered his work to be empirical and recognized the importance of unconscious processes and developed a method for interpreting patterns of unconscious activity. This method started with the raw data of narratives about everyday events, dreams, associations and the therapist-client interactions which gradually produced hypotheses about patterns of unconscious activity that could account for how the patient's mind and their behaviour work.

The classic Freudian model of mind within psychoanalysis, where the secrets of the unconscious can be unearthed has been criticized by Spence (1982) such that therapists, as far as he is concerned, are not involved in the *'archaeological project of unearthing the historical past'* but rather in the business of constructing meaning (pursuing a narrative task) rather than *'discovering meanings 'in' the mind'* Crossley (2000: 58).

As I set out on this inquiry with female teachers, not as therapist but as researcher with counselling experience, I am concerned to find a way to develop a context in which I can facilitate them in creating and sharing meanings in relation to their professional identity, but not just through the use of language. By engaging with them in the process of using non-verbal, visual, arts-based means, I want to explore whether or not it is possible to listen for and interpret deeper layers of meaning which are represented in their narratives that might not otherwise have been present by using language alone.

I start out somewhere between Spence and Freud/Jung, still curious about whether or not the potential remains regarding a role for psychodynamic thinking in understanding identity. Or, is it the case that through the collaborative research context, the research participant and I together will pursue the 'narrative task - that of '*shaping bits of memory, fantasy and association into a coherent and plausible story'* (Josselson, 1995: 331) - only on this occasion, through the use of creative images?

Before moving directly to the inquiry I feel I want to make the case for creative narrative in the next chapter and raise my concerns about the privileging of language in narrative and the power of symbolization.

CHAPTER 4: ARTS-BASED RESEARCH AND CREATIVE NARRATIVE

> 'The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, this de-concealing i.e. the truth of beings happens in the work.'
>
> (Heidegger, 1971: 39)

4.1 Arts-based research – forcing open the 'tightly stitched seams'.

Art-based research falls within qualitative research (Eisner, 1999, Herman, 2000, Levine 2000), heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) and has been used in educational contexts (Barone & Eisner, 1997, Eisner, 1991; Mitchell & Weber, 1999) and therapy contexts (McNiff, 1998). Braud & Anderson (1998) describe transpersonal research approaches as including arts-based methods for data-gathering.

Qualitative researchers, therefore, have been experimenting with alternative representational (visual and kinaesthetic) forms for some time (see Butler-Kisber, 1998, in education). Until recently, language has been considered to be the basis of unconsciousness (eg Lacan, 1977) since language shapes and reveals our experience. However, it has been recognized (e.g. Merleau-Ponty, 1969) that experience is not limited to that which is languaged and that human experience is embodied rather than being structured solely by language. Thus, as long as we are tied to transcribed verbal protocols, there are aspects of experience, such as unconscious processes, that remain beyond our grasp and qualitative research must strive to incorporate non-verbal data.

Although arts-based research is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of educational research, there has been a notable shift towards qualitative approaches using arts-based research in the social sciences generally and education more specifically. This is evidenced by such movements as the setting up of a special interest group (SIG) in the American Educational Research Association and the appearance of special edition journals being given over to the exploration of the topic, such as *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* (2001, Summer) and *Qualitative Inquiry* (2003, volume 9). Mullen (2003: 166) describes this *'explosion in arts-based*

inquiry' as *'forcing open its* (social science) *tightly stitched seams'*, thus creating innovative junctures among art, education and research:

> 'Within the field of education, arts-based research is emerging as an inquiry tradition that reaches beyond disciplinary boundaries.'
>
> (Piantanida et al, 2003: 182).

Finley (2003: 282) describes three main but interconnected foci for arts-based researchers: (i) deep participant and researcher inquiries, (ii) personal, professional and political actions to improve participants' lives and (iii) future-oriented work, involving social justice, diversity, civic discourse and caring. The exploratory goals of this inquiry are most clearly located within (i) above.

Despite the excitement generated by this nascent arts-based research movement, there is also a concomitant concern for vulnerability, where we run the risk of having our work dismissed, before it is understood, according to Piantanida et al (op cit), unless we provide a 'logic of justification' (after Smith & Heshusius, 1986).

One of the axioms of this logic of justification may be to define arts-based research as a distinctive inquiry tradition within the qualitative research genre and, to uncover or debate the philosophical assumptions that underpin it. In the field of education, there appears to be an increasing alignment of art-based research with 'emancipatory research' and 'commitment to action' (Lincoln, 1998) where *'art-based researchers work to inspire thoughtful action.'* (Mullen, 2003: 168). This is what Finley (2003: 287) describes as *'guerrilla warfare against the repressive structures of everyday lives'.* On the other hand, there are those who argue that art in and of itself, particularly good art, has an educative power.

From the emergent literature, whilst the value of a nondogmatic approach is endorsed, there is a clearly articulated relationship between arts-based research and various forms of narrative and ethnographic work. Barone (2001) challenges creative research forms, including narrative, life history, poetry, drama, visual art to have a politically challenging aim of defying prevailing master narratives through aesthetic form. Tackling the issue of replication in research, he draws on Rorty's (1989) and Bruner's (1986) distinct modes of human inquiry and argues for the *'uniqueness of a single historically situated, nonrepeatable case'* (p210), where the art-based research goal is to prompt reflection and alternative interpretations of educational

phenomena in readers and viewers. Saldaña (1999: 219), too, argues for quality when pushing the boundaries and challenges qualitative inquiry to experiment with artistic modes of research representation using ethnotheatre, as he does, but stating that *'most researchers have been taught to never let the data speak for itself'* (p223).

Barone & Eisner (1997) have been major proponents on the leading edge of the arts-based movement within education, arguing for approaches to research that rewrite the rationalist script. They challenge the notion that all educational research must conform to the 'culture of science' which propounds that:

> 'Although we may agree that artists and writers have much to contribute to human understanding, this does not mean that educational researchers should abandon science's exclusive role in the discipline.'
>
> (Mayer, 2000: 38)

Slattery (2001) and McMahon (2000), independently, offer provocative examples of how intuitive, nonconscious knowing finds form in aesthetic representations, and these aesthetic representations are, in turn, probed with considerable reason to yield insights into self, Other and arts-based educational research (Piantanida et al, 2003: 199). Kilbourn, (1999: 28) also describes a 'self-conscious method', in which the researcher should make explicit an awareness of his or her role as a writer with a biography, and make clear their sensitivity to the conceptual and methodological decisions in the study. This links to issues of positionality in ethnography and autoethnography but finds opposition in those art-based researchers, who consider that the communication of the inquiry process is counterproductive in that *'art informs through its evocative power'* (Piantanida et al., 2003: 186) and is therefore sufficient onto itself.

Nevertheless, the issue of quality within this emergent paradigm has to remain an open conversation. A space has opened up in the research discourse which challenges the exclusivity of conformity to validity and reliability as quality control instruments for this type of arts-based research (Slattery, 2003).

4.2 What is the role of the visual in narrative inquiry – narrative picturing or picturing the narrative?

Until relatively recently, there has been a paucity of qualitative or ethnographic research using what might be referred to as visual methodology. Instead the written word has been privileged. (Harper, 1998). Visual methodologies can be used to describe research design that incorporate any kind of visual evidence as an adjunct to other methods (with a necessary element being the transposition into words e.g. through dialogue) and rarely is the visual data deployed in its own right (Harrison, 2002: 88). In addition, there is little evidence of the use of visual methods in narrative inquiry:

> 'we must examine if, and to what extent, the visual can be used to construct narratives…and the ways in which visual narratives can provide us with data on experience.'
>
> (Harrison 2002: 89).

Banks (1995: 16) makes a three-fold distinction between visual records produced by the investigator, those produced by the researched and the study of 'representations', although he points out that already *'such distinctions have begun to collapse.'* Visual images can be used in narrative research within all three of the above frameworks, and although it is as yet unclear how art will be represented in the 'unfolding story' of this inquiry, the gainful hope is to use all three.

I suppose that incorporating visual records or artefacts within narrative is not a gargantuan methodological leap (and is also present in the form of visual sociology) but deeper questions remain and these are - does visual narrating have a genre in its own right as a form of subjective understanding and identity construction? Or, is it merely a means to an end, ie. the stimuli for the generation of verbal data for analysis and interpretation? The visual may become part of the data and have a relationship to verbal data and the eventual text but is there something essential in the visual form expressed in its own imagistic language? At heart the debate lie questions concerning the relative emphasis placed on *researcher-as-artist* and *artist-as-researcher* – an emphasis now increasingly visible in the arts-based research methodology literature.

Clearly the more orthodox direction is for produced images to be used in conjunction with in-depth interviews as eliciting techniques; it is the reflexivity between image and verbalization that produces the data. Asking participants to interpret images of themselves and/or others elicits processes of making sense, of assigning meanings. By contrast to this emphasis on interpretation, Harrison (2002), who deploys photography in narrative, uses self-generated images (e.g. painting, drawing, artefact) to symbolize and make visible aspects of the self *'in social and physical environments'* (p93) which he argues may be read hermeneutically as *text.*

In line with such a stance, Stuhlmiller (1996: 183) suggests that components of sensory experience are lost when we transform that experience through language. For her, the aim in using the visual is to tap into some pre-reflective or pre-pictorial memory. Her technique involves asking people to direct their thoughts inwards – to the *'mind's eye'.* She argues that sensory information is invoked, and memories are narrated as *'here and now stories'*, which may be painful and traumatic as well as pleasant.

Carroll (2001) raises the question of visual metaphors. He noted that images differ from words in being recognized *'simply by looking'* (p348). Unlike verbal symbols, the image is read directly, not having to be decoded. Images can be symbolic (like dive) although not all images are necessarily visual metaphors (e.g. family photos).

Photographs and memories reference experiences whose relevance shifts through time. Narration, therefore, is an important way in which experiences are rescued from oblivion and from unconscious:

> ' ...photographs are an important site for the embodiment of memory, as traces for working through a place for the self in the past and present.'
>
> (Stuhlmiller 1996: 183)

4.3 Limits of language?

As part of my 'logic of justification' for turning towards symbolic representation, there are two aspects of the limitations of language that I wish to explore. One aspect concerns the challenges thrown up by Lacan in his interpretation of the

psychoanalytic unconscious and the other is the limits set within narrative inquiry by the over-privileging of language.

For me, Lacan (1977, 1987) raises deeply provocative questions about the relationship between 'self', unconscious and the role of language. Lacan (1987) presents post-structuralist notions of the 'self' that preclude self-conscious methods capable of being reasoned and justified. For Lacan, since self is *'only an illusion, an image created by a misperception of the relation between body and self.'* (Klages, 2001: 2), it is simply a product of the unconscious, where the unconscious is the ground of all being, not consciousness. In Lacanian discourse, language is given a prime role in the formation of the unconscious - there is no knowing oneself without entering into the tyranny of language. Language orders and affects the natural passage from instinctive impulse to expression (Pickering & Skinner, 1990: 287) where meaning is either condensed in metaphor or displaced in metonomy. Unconscious symbolism, for Lacan as I understand him, in such therapeutic aspects as dream analysis depends upon word-play - on puns, associations etc. that are chiefly verbal, not non-verbal or imaginal. I am in no position to contest Lacanian thinking in depth but I would argue that there needs to be some further consideration given to the role of mental image. It seems a reasonable step to conjure that images, like words, do not ultimately give meaning or stability to identity or self. Images, as in the case of words, are also like a chain of 'signifiers' (in de Saussure's (1974) terms) constantly in play. One image can lead to another, in the same way that one word leads to another by association, but never arrives at the *thing* the images (or words) represent. Therefore the meaning of 'I' is never possible, there is no stable self - but the rudimentary language of unconscious is image not words.

Moving to my second concern with language, narrative and storying focus on human meanings achieved through a discursive approach which attends to the accounts people give of themselves, their actions, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, wishes, hopes and fears. Despite the increasingly popularity of this movement in research, Frosh (2002: 134) declares increasing doubt about this 'turn to language', which within a postmodernist perspective suggests that nothing meaningful exists outside words. Using words clearly is particularly important when attending to conscious meanings but there is the danger of reducing all meaning to that which can be narrated. Frosh

(op cit.) argues that there is a point where discourse fails, where language is characterized by its insufficiency rather than its expressive capacity, where what is known in and by the person lies quite simply outside symbolization through words. There is a considerable emotional force which lies outside narrative, even outside what can be spoken.

Such inaccessible, inexpressible experiences, Frosh (op cit.) emphasizes are key in people's psychological functioning in life. They often have specific connection with trauma and the processing of traumatically troubling events. They are not easily reducible to the narrative stance. Things that cannot be said are at the core of our experience, we are what they are. Once they are symbolized, they no longer traumatize as much. But this does not make it easy and there are times when putting things into words is a difficult and painful process.

4.4 Symbolism, interpretation and unconscious

> 'Symbolism is not only international, it stretches over the ages...It kindles our imagination and leads us to realms of wordless thought.'
> (Lin Yu-Tang quoted in Cooper, 1987: 7)

According to Stevens (1998: 12) a symbol is *'an image or a thing which acquires its symbolic value through the meanings and emotions it evokes in us.*' In symbology, a symbol is not considered something that can be consciously invented or specified by convention and the Greek word 'symbolon' referred to a token which was a verification of identity. Among the various theoretical accounts, Jung's study of the cultural, collective and psychological significance of symbols is impressive, where collective symbols can be understood from the study of history, myths, religions, folklore etc. whilst the personal determinants of a symbol can only derive from the person's biography. For Jung (1969) a symbol signifies *'something more and other than itself which eludes our present knowledge.*' It has therefore conscious (known) and unconscious (unknown) elements and Jung and Von Franz (1964) argue independently that the rational, deductive application of verbal language is not adequate to meet the task of explicating the unknown aspect of a symbol since this *'points to something more than consciousness can know.'* (Stevens, 1998: 12).

Simon (1992 :89), working as an art therapist, suggests that a piece of artwork *'symbolizes its meaning'* and through their images, people uniquely *'symbolize a particular attitude towards reality as it is experienced at that time.'* McNiff (1996), also as an art therapist, talks of the way we attribute meaning to the imagery of others in order to advance our own interpretive viewpoints. His concern is with our tendency to fit interpretations into our psychological categories and *'(T)this occurs because the practice of psychotherapy is couched within a narrative world view.'* (p94). Biography and linear history have been the primary frameworks for organizing experience whereas there has been little research dealing with the purely visual qualities of imagery and McNiff (op. cit.) argues that we need to consider suspending the dominance of the narrative (p95). His position is that we have done enough in creative arts therapy to encourage looking and interpreting from multiple perspectives.

In the same vein, Efland (2002) proposes that art gives rise to multiple interpretations, according to (i) in the actual creation of a piece and (ii) the efforts of the viewer, listener to elucidate the possible meanings of such works:

> 'Artistic productions capture and mirror the artist's interpretive vision.'
>
> (Efland 2002: 162)

In terms of the creation of an art piece, interpretation incorporates personal knowledge as seen from the artist's perspective and their interpretation of what he/she has seen, felt or undergone. It is an imaginative reordering of that experience and its embodiment in a medium.'

> 'Works of art take the form of non-propositional structures of imagination, derived from images or percepts that awaken feelings and emotions. The situations presented by life have their comic, tragic, and ironic components, and although one tragedy sometimes may seem to be like another, each unfolds with its own unique story.'
>
> (Efland, 2002: 163)

In line with the wider work on symbology, what these proponents are therefore arguing is that art and artistic artefacts carry within them unique, inherent meanings (often significant and emotional) that are reflective of the individuals (selves) who create them. Jungian theory of symbols adds the wide collective or archetypal significance.

Adopting a broader social science perspective, I found Barry's (1996: 411) symbolic constructivist research approach helpful in underpinning this study in his emphasis of the less conscious dimensions of images. He uses non-routine, art-based portrayal *'to catalyze alternative knowings of conscious, tacit and non-conscious beliefs and feelings.'* He is quite explicit that there is a qualitative difference, a 'value-added', between artistically presenting one's experience and solely narrating it:

> 'To paint one's world is to express and experience it very differently than talking about it – talking through the painting beseeches us to alter our story. Consequently, participants end up conveying their world in ways they may have purposively avoided or never thought to do. As art therapists and depth psychologists have long known (and other social scientists are discovering), art-as-inquiry does things.'
>
> (Barry, 1996: 411/12)

Images evoke more than might be said and thereby reveal tacit or non-conscious aspects as well as defences against these. In this way, images created can serve as both *'mirrors and windows'*, challenging existing meanings and developing imaginative alternatives, thereby reflecting back who we are while simultaneously *'suggesting new horizons'* (p411). This is especially the case, he argues, where people are dealing with embodied images.

Teacher images and teacher research

Incorporating symbols and imagery as data sources is light in educational research generally, although there is some interest developing within teacher research. Weber and Mitchell (1995, 1996, 1997) and Mitchell and Weber (1999), working in North America, have pushed the boundaries of teacher research by exploring the pervasive imagery, including how childhood memories and social stereotypes colour emerging teacher identities. Their work perhaps comes closer to this present inquiry than anything else I could locate in the educational literature, although their focus is not explicitly on 'unconscious' dimensions. In their 1999 study, Mitchell and Weber set out to understand better what they describe as *'the darker and lighter'* aspects of teachers' work (p1). In so doing, they explore the use of photography, written memoirs, movies and video to focus on specific aspects of the teaching self.

Their work draws on the creative power of images, memories, everyday details, technology, and nostalgia in unexpected or unconventional ways. Taking a social

constructivist view of the process, they suggest ways *'to investigate and reinvent teacher identity and practice'* through *'stories about our own and other teachers' struggles for self-knowledge and identity'* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999: 1/2). They see an empowering or emancipatory role in this exposition of images and conclude that the value of writing memories is in order to make the past usable so that remembering serves to *'illuminate and transform the present'* (after Tompkins, 1996: 17). Mitchell & Weber (op cit.) suggest that what is needed is a 'teacher gaze' (p7) through which to interrogate what is out there imagistically in the general culture as well as what is hidden within ourselves so that this will help teachers to *'reframe their own personal choices'* (Weber & Mitchell, 1996: 311).

Memory and memoir

> 'We only store in memory images of value. The value may be lost over the passage of time....And of course we cleave to things because they posses heavy negative charges.'
>
> (Hampl, 1996: 270).

Autobiographical memory can be viewed as memory that is self-referential, retrospective and filled with imagery and interpretation of events. The study of autobiographical memory, however, is dogged with problematics. Theories of memory abound. On the one hand there are many, like Le Doux (1989), who view recollection of past experience as being due to *'memory traces'* where stored information enables us to recreate in memory a past episode - *'to remember is to be conscious of some past experience'* (p181). On the other end of the continuum are those like Bennett and Hacker (2003), philosopher and neuroscientist, who argue that the past can influence the present directly, obviating the need for memory traces. In such a relational model of memory we can have '*retention without storage.'* Similarly, Damasio (1994: 100/01) argues that images are not stored as facsimile pictures of things or events, there are no permanently held pictures of anything. Mental images are simply momentary constructions of patterns that were once experience, where exact replication is low.

As potential stimuli to memory, then, the use of photographs in relation to narratives and identity provides some interesting methodological and epistemological debate. Holland (1991: 1) contends that looking back through family photos becomes an *'act of recognition of the past'* which reveal *'many possible pasts.'* Memory is

interwoven with private fantasy as viewers make their own tracks through family photographs. On each and every occasion a photo is viewed, Holland (op. cit.) believes that the past itself will be reconstructed, which is also a consequence of the shifting position of the self. As with memory, then, photographs function to anchor our present selves with the past but they are essentially 'scraps'. It is under or beyond the photograph that the person's story lies buried. Such fragments though allow for a construction and reconstruction of biographical narratives, a piecing together and re-ordering of 'moments'. Photographs according to Harrison (ibid.) provide a basis for narrative work; they are preserved memories that illustrate the person's life or provide a way of communicating who they are and where they have come from.

Sutherland (1997: 12) cautions against the *'well-used anecdote' –'the memories that we tell about ourselves over and over again.'* Using objects as prompts to remember is a strategy that can enhance memory work around childhood e.g. photographs. Salaman (1970) distinguishes between the remembering of people in their twenties and those who are in their forties, fifties or older. She observes that as meaning of childhood memories becomes clearer in maturity, the pain of memories from childhood may become psychologically resolved. Kotre (1995), too, suggests that perhaps the most important type of remembering ('self-defining memories') in late adulthood is aimed at *'inner change'* (p176) which may reveal *'inner truths'*. Thus, many memories which had previously been irretrievable, within this view, become available for recollection:

> 'Of course, landmarks themselves are tossed about in the river of memory. Births, marriages, deaths – along with graduations, moves, transitions – may change our lives so thoroughly that they seem vivid and recent.'
>
> (Kotre, 1995: 108)

Role of imagination in image-making

> 'The image is a mental picture that can be traced back to sense experience.'
>
> (Johnson, 1987: 153).

The capacity to deal with visual images and symbols is closely linked to the creative power of imagination. Efland (2002) talks of how products of the imagination differ from everyday, ordinary thinking by being more innovative and less concerned with

typical or conventional communication. Imagination refers to the cognitive processes that enable individuals to organize or reorganize images, to combine or recombine symbols, as in the creation of metaphors or narrative productions (p134). Imagination, then, is not any one specific cognitive operation but is the result of cognitive acts that enable individuals to construct meanings that are generally less dependent on conventional, rule-governed or propositional forms of thinking and communication.

Eisner (1976; 1982; 1993) and Gardner (1973) both argued that the arts offer unique opportunities for representing ideas and feelings which cannot be matched by other systems of representation. Both contend that the notion of non-redundance, the idea that the arts provide unique opportunities for the development of the mind that are not available in other modalities. They argued that the mind develops multiple forms of representation through experience gained through the senses, with some grounded in visual perception and others originating in auditory or tactile sources. *'personal aspects of human experience'* that cannot be shared socially until they are made public.

> 'imagination is a pervasive structuring activity...absolutely essential to rationality.'
>
> (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 13)

4.5 Building blocks for creative narrative - linking the body and the mind through metaphor

Somewhere near the outset of this inquiry into paradox, I indicated my strong reaction to the domination of language in understanding human identity. While I respect the vital role that language plays in our social and personal lives, I intuitively cannot adopt the position, which purports that there can be no consciousness, no sense of self, without language. No matter how much postmodern or poststructuralist literature I read, I could not in the end feel persuaded. Higher order reflection I accept undoubtedly requires language but my 'gut feeling' is that there must persist some rudimentary and potentially powerful substrate below that and this is likely to link to basic sensation, perception and emotions. As I come to the end of my 'logic of justification' for the use of 'creative narrative', I want to

share briefly a few core ideas from an area of literature that I feel passionately excited by and which may ultimately create a dialectic integration across the present gulf between an individualist perspective and a societal perspective. The area of literature to which I refer is most ably described by writers, such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980); Johnson (1987); Lakoff and Johnson (1999); Kövecses (2000) and Carroll (2001) and where the common link resides in the power attributed to metaphor both physiologically, conceptually and culturally.

We are surrounded by metaphors. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), in their seminal work *Metaphors we live by,* show us the myriad ways in which our conceptual systems are in effect constructed through metaphors. Unlike the view that these are all socially deposited on us, they postulate a type of schema that begins with images and bodily experiences acquired directly in perception as providing the foundation for categorization, abstract reason, propositional and non-propositional forms of thinking, metaphor and narrative. Image-schemata then are cognitive structures that are derived from a variety of images and high order rational thinking can be accounted for through extensions of these image-schemata, also linking to Barthés' work referred to earlier. What fits for me is how Lakoff & Johnson (1980) propose that the basic level of bodily and perceptual experience is the foundational source of cognition and the origin of meaning, which is then interacted with and built upon by socialization and language.

Such arguments are then extended in later work. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) where they make three central assertions (i) the mind is embodied (ii) thought is mostly unconscious and (iii) abstract thoughts are mostly metaphorical. I leave this literature review now believing that this notion of embodied cognition has profound implications for research methodology in consciousness, self and identity and offers a way of providing a 'paradoxical logic' to the link between biological experience and social construction.

In conclusion, then, narrative inquiry, as presently constituted relies heavily on language and text; arts-based research, on the other hand, embraces visual and expressive arts in its methodology. I am making a case for what I term 'creative narrative' as an approach, which is more properly a synthesis of both approaches to the study of human identity. By synthesis, I intend that neither form should be

subservient to the other and particularly so in the case of the use of visual forms, that might tend to be used merely as frills or as relief to narrative texts. Images and narrative should combine in 'creative narrative' to become complementary and integral to meaning-making, especially where this includes the potential for access to non-conscious or tacit dimensions of experience. I, therefore, set out to explore whether creative narrative holds the promise to provide thicker descriptions, including non-conscious aspects, and thereby fuller and richer understanding of teachers' identities.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Setting out

> 'Heuristic research is a way of exploring deeply some phenomenon which we wish to know more about…via tacit processes.'
>
> (West, 1998a: 229)

In an earlier mapping of the study I had laid out in some considerable depth the steps and stages within a familiarly, classic, qualitative research paradigm. Having taken the narrative turn, however, and with the focus remaining on unconscious dimensions of teacher narrative, I encountered ongoing difficulty in reframing and refiguring not only my 'design' but also my language. Twenty years of psychological research training had disciplined any vestige of *I-ness* out of research description. Depersonalized language is second-nature and extremely obstinate to being put in reverse, all of which made this chapter a particularly difficult one to re-write. I will have to be forgiven if, on occasion, the style of expression trips awkwardly over seemingly invisible paradigm boundaries with their associated registers.

My primary goals as originally identified had been:

(i) 'To add to our understanding of the role of the unconscious in developing and maintaining teaching identity, and; (ii) In what ways do previous experiences (now unconscious) find expression (become symbolized) and what can they tell us about how teachers restrict or expand their identities as a consequence?'

While these still stand as reasonably framed and noble research aims within a genre, the language immediately identifies my social and ethical distance as the researcher when, in fact, I have turned out to be so essentially and so personally engaged in the whole research process. In addition to this by-standing, certain presumptions about the nature of identity, development and unconscious processes are unnecessarily prescriptive and restrictive in these original research aims. Certainly, as I explored the narrative landscape, deconstructed my favoured theoretical frameworks (of Freud and Jung) and disaggregated the unconscious from its psychodynamic tethers, I found it increasingly complicated to understand the nature of what I was engaged in with any clarity, never mind explain it to anyone else. The process I will now describe is hopefully somewhat sharper with hindsight but this is part of the re-

storying in which I attempt to communicate the study to the reader and to myself as clearly as I can. In any case, the aims within the narrative genre remain more exploratory than definitive from the outset.

5.2 Relating rationale

Having taken the narrative turn, there were times I declare that I wished I could have erased, rewritten or dropped the reference to the unconscious in the focus of the study. I could find no easy allies in the narrative literature, as already indicated above - either unconscious was derided, collectivized, or not viewed as relevant to the conscious, socially constructed, language-intensive, meaning-making structures of narrative theory. And then, I got angry, angry at the privileging of language, and angry that in order to explore the narrative territory, it seemed I would have to subjugate that which I 'knew' from experience and had demonstrated to me time and again through therapeutic and personal development endeavours. This accrued 'felt' knowledge was that there was some seemingly powerful meaning-potential inherent in the process of creative, symbolic expression through visual forms for those who engaged in it, with a quest for self-understanding. Through the creation of images in relation to self, new meanings, previously unaware, unvoiced, unexpressed, half-understood came to be significant and capable of being incorporated into a person's social and/or emotional understanding of themselves to the point that new actions or directions could be taken in their lives, personally or indeed, professionally. These processes and self-understandings appeared from experience as participant and observer, client and counsellor, teacher and student to be qualitatively different from those generated through language and to have unexpected and surprising emotional turns of events for those involved. From the outset, I think I wanted to find a way to explore and bring an understanding of these processes to the discourse of educational research and to unpick and confront the challenges in so doing.

5.3 Narrating aims

In the most general sense, and this is what my participants heard me say at the outset of our conversations together; I wanted to explore unconscious in teacher identity through teachers' creative narratives. There was no definition of what I

meant by *unconscious* at this stage although I did know that I was no longer committed to following the trajectories or consequences of ego-defence mechanisms. I did have a sense that I was concerned to listen to, for and with the participants for those experiences finding expression in the creative art-pieces that initially were '*undisclosed to all collaborators in the research project'* (Walsh, 1996: 380). To frame it in the language of narrative, I was hoping to be able to describe some of the tacit structures and processes of meaning underlying teachers' lived experience.

What is transpiring now is that I am finding narrative concepts and words popping up in my thoughts, as I turn to articulate the more embedded and implicit questions that are likely to guide the reflexive (or interpretive) elements of the study. These are introduced in order to help frame what has emerged from the creative narratives and the conversations surrounding these, rather than guiding questions at the outset of the study or during the research process. Of course this is suggestive of a rational, considered process rather than the chaotic one which more accurately reflects my experience:

Nevertheless and, in no particular order, these are:

1. How are unconscious meanings in relation to teachers' identity elaborated through the individual research conversations between myself as researcher and the participants through their individual creative narrative pieces?

2. How do participants represent their experiences past, present and future that would have been previously below awareness or been unaware of, and how do they talk of these? Do they consider that they could have elicited these 'new significances' through research conversations alone or were the processes and product of creative narratives crucial?

3. How are unconscious stories or aspects of stories symbolized within the creative narrative pieces?

4. What is the relationship if any between what appears to be symbolically significant to the participants and the types of stories that are told?

5. Do creative narratives suggest or provide access to differing basic structures in life-story, especially unconscious ones?

6. Do the various creative tasks manifest alternative, unexpected life story elements that are considered important to teachers' sense of their identity(ies)? Thus:

Autobiographical time-line... are previously unspoken or unknown episodes, epiphanies or critical incidents symbolized and interpreted in terms of being meaningful within participants' stories of identity?

Masks...are there aspects of the creative representation which participants attribute to an 'inner' or 'hidden' self or aspect(s) of their teacher identity? What are the stories surrounding these? What place embodied experience in terms of identity?

Self-system pictures....what is the main story of the self in the self-system picture? Which aspects of teacher identity are being symbolized and which aspects narrated are previously unthought, unspoken or indeed, unfelt?

Self-box..... is this creative construction viewed as representing different aspects of identity (sub-selves or multiple identities) and do the participants identify any concept of 'core' or stable sense of identity?

5.4 Grappling with research design

As indicated, there was a research design from the outset which became enmeshed within the narrative paradigm with the whole process becoming more emergent and recursive rather than following the more standard, qualitative, interpretive pattern. Even though the narrative turn was taken, the study remained phenomenological in its orientation but with a fluid view of the design process. In this sense, research design was viewed as a 'work of art' after Eisner (1991) – with phases connected to different creative approaches attempting to allow the possibility of symbolizing previously unconscious experience:

> 'To conduct qualitative research means to grapple with the problem of unconsciousness.'
>
> (Walsh, 1996: 378).

The commitment from the outset, therefore, was a qualitative, process-oriented study involving participants in art-making processes, followed by in-depth narrative exploration of aspects, both known and unknown, of the participants' personal and professional experience. The reflexive aspects were to be captured through the participants' personal journal work, in addition to ongoing private research conversations with me about their creative art-pieces, which became known as 'creative narratives'.

In addition, although I recognized even at an early stage of planning the research that *I* would have to be located in the study in terms of my value-base since:

> 'In writing, qualitative researchers need to become much more self-aware of their 'point of view' and of the kind of imagery, metaphors and ironies that inform the overall writing of their work.'
>
> (Plummer, 1983: 14).

and, *'readers (and reviewers) want and deserve to know how the researcher claims to know'* (Richardson, 2000: 930), I had not fully understood that an essential part of this study was in fact my quest more fully to understand my own professional identity. The autoethnographic dimension and my own creative narrative were therefore to become integral to the whole enterprise. This personal dimension therefore grew through the organic development of the study.

5.5 Research participants and selection process

Due to the in-depth nature of narrative exploration, I decided that by necessity, the number of participants would have to be restricted. The sample (although 'sample' tends to be a 'dirty word' in qualitative research, (Ball, 1993: 37)) would be an opportunity sample, with all the associated advantages and disadvantages. The research process was therefore embedded in a naturalistic process arising from my teaching of a module within the *Personal and Civic Education* masters option in a university continuing professional development programme, during the academic year 2002-03. In the end, from an invited group of ten enrolled school teachers and educators (nine female and one male), six (all female) agreed to engage with me in the study. In the end, five were able to complete the research process in full. One participant who completed the research process was not a qualified teacher but

worked in a youth work context. For the purposes of this study, her creative narrative, therefore, was omitted. Four creative narratives are included.

Given the 'fit-for-purpose' nature of the sampling, selection of these teachers as potential participants was not constrained by conventional issues of representativeness i.e. no research-based rationale existed for selecting any participants according to gender, age, ethnic origin, religion, teaching subject, type of school etc. All participants, by dint of entry criteria to masters study, would have at least three years, full-time professional experience in an educational context. This seemed like a critical criterion and would ensure that any potential participants would have a professional experiential base upon which to reflect.

In addition, I had not set out to study an all-female sample. However, the chance of any kind of gender-balanced sample was automatically limited by the composition of the module group. The ratio of female to male students in the total population of masters students in this university context is approximately 7:1 and the general pattern has been for significantly fewer male students electing to study modules relating to areas of psychology, counselling, personal and professional development in which I teach. Due to the self-selecting nature of the participants, it is perhaps not surprising then that the final group comprised four female teachers and educators from primary and secondary schools.

During the module (a thirty-hour, part-time, twilight 30m point module on *Personal Education*), the total student group was exposed to some key theory, groupwork and personal development pedagogy associated with the teaching of personal and social education in the classroom. Amongst the aims of the module was the introduction of the student group to creative artwork as a means of pupil expression through engaging in their own. A number of the tasks relating to the creative narratives in the research were undertaken during workshops on this module (viz. autobiographical time-line; mask-making and self-system picture).

Towards the end of the module, once the formal assessment was completed, I outlined my own research proposal with them in general terms. I stated that my goal was a bit diffuse at this early stage but it was concerned to explore the unconscious aspects in teachers' identities through the use of creative art work and narrative-

type conversations. I felt it was important to outline the likely investment that this would require on their behalf. Whilst I could not specify precisely the time-involvement, this was liable to entail an additional workshop on creative work, some ongoing personal journaling on the creative pieces and at least two, one-to-one research conversations with me based on their creative pieces. Through this initial discussion, I made it clear as far as possible that this invitation was not in any way an obligation but a process in which some of them might wish to engage. It could be viewed by them as extending work already begun with me during the module and whilst I would be disappointed if no-one elected to engage with me, I would also quite reasonably understand if this was the final outcome of my request. To allow time for consideration and anonymity of reply within the group, I followed this up by sending a letter of invitation (Appendix 1) to all the module participants, asking them formally to collaborate with me. They were directed to reply by means of a tear-off slip, to be returned in an enclosed self-addressed envelope.

In the end, six of the students returned their consent slips, while the four who declined indicated a variety of reasons relating to time and pressure of other commitments. Some of the participants who did agree indicated that involvement might be limited and would be dependent on their availability and my willingness to accommodate their timetables, which I was happy to do. Details of the four participants who are included in this study are outlined in Table 1 below.

Overall, in retrospect, although the whole process did seem to be a natural, evolutionary one moving from module tutor to narrative researcher there were certain latent, inherent difficulties or potential pitfalls, which I am not sure I faced head-on at the time and will be discussed in section 5.6.

Table1: Summary of biographical details of the participants

Participant	Age-range	Main Professional role	Current status/additional responsibilities	No of research conversations
Fionnuala	Mid-30s	Post-primary school teacher (Science)	A-level teacher	4 (6 hrs)
Kathy	Mid-50s	Primary school teacher	Advisory officer with ELB (Primary issues)	4 (7hrs)
Daisy	Early 30s	Post-primary school teacher (Religious Education)	On secondment Head of Department	3 (5hrs)
Tricia	Mid-30s	Post-primary school teacher (Business Studies)	Head of Department Careers teacher	4 (6hrs)

5.6 Research mapping

A series of processes or stages can be identified which map the general terrain of the research process with the participants:-

- preparatory group discussion;
- written agreement to participate by participants;
- a brief initial individual interview meeting (contractual);
- individual narrative research conversations on autobiographical time-line, personal masks, self-system picture;
- workshop on self-box and reflection;
- follow-up research conversation, including closure;
- creative narrative scripts sent to participants for validation, correction and feedback.

In addition and threaded throughout this research process was the ongoing collation of:

- participants' narrative reflection through stimulated writing (ongoing journals) and taped, oral research conversation, later transcribed;
- autoethnographic account (researcher log/reflective journal) including reflection on the making of my own self-box and incorporation of feedback from conversations with dissertation supervisor, and critical friend support and feedback.

Narrative gathering lasted for a period of six months with no participant going through the process at the same rate, in order to accommodate their timetables and, indeed, my own. This process is perhaps best epitomized as one of *'progressive revelation'* (after Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999: 3), evolutionary rather than pre-determined. I can identify with moving through phases associated with heuristic research (from initial engagement through to explication and wishful for 'creative synthesis', after Moustakas, 1990) but certainly not in a linear fashion (West, 1998a; 2001). Heuristic research recognizes the importance of including emotions in data collection and encourages a search for the discovery of meaning, but emphasizing the subjective voice of the researcher. As part of my the drive against my professional research conditioning on this research journey, I intuitively followed, at least in spirit, Kleining and Witt's (2000) four rules of heuristic research, by (i) remaining open and willing to change my preconceptions if data disagreed; (ii) viewing the research topic as preliminary and open to change; (iii) collecting as much varied data as possible; and, (iv) perhaps a little less so on this one, directing my analysis towards the discovery of similarities.

Accordingly, as I attempt to communicate about the inquiry process, I grapple with chronological representation – what I 'now know' and what 'I knew then'. As Ellis (1985) highlights, in traditional ethnography, it is taken for granted that when events happened then, the author observed, categorized and analysed them, then tells the reader about them from their current, distanced perspective, which, it is assumed does not affect the telling. As I understand it, in this research study, time is more complexly enmeshed in personal, chronological storytelling, where it is hard to

ignore that I, the narrator and the subject merge (Polkinghorne, 1988), and that each telling affected the teller, which, in turn, affected the next telling. (Ellis, 1985: 316).

Thus, the 'telling' of the research stages above is intended to be helpful in explicating some of the temporal events of the study to the reader but the interlapping of participants' stories and my story as they unfolded and interacted remains deeply enmeshed.

5.7 Research methods

The methodology rests on the assumption that image-making is in part an unconscious process. The research activities included a range of creative activities and thereafter remained focused on the participants' consciously articulated experience in response to the creative images, including my own as researcher in the piece.

Methods included innovative narrative and imagery-based approaches, coupled with counselling-oriented research conversations, which should, I considered, permit access to unconscious (including forgotten or previously unspoken, unthought, or unfelt) material. In so doing, the suite of research activities was chosen to engage the participants, through facilitation, in an in-depth, emotionally engaged, reflective analysis on how they 'make meaning' (Bruner, 1990) of their identities, past, present and future; personal and professional; conscious and unconscious.

Each of the main research activities/methods will now be considered briefly.

Research conversations

> '…interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we try to understand our fellow human beings.'
>
> (Fontana & Frey, 1994: 361)

Interviewing in research terms, as distinct from therapy, involves *'an interchange of views between two or more people … for the purposes of knowledge production'* (Kvale, 1996: 11). Whilst interviewing has a wide variety of forms (Rogers, 1945; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954; Douglas, 1985; Mischler, 1986; Silverman, 1993) and a multiplicity of uses (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000), in this case, interviews between me and the individual participants were

characterized as 'research conversations'. Research conversations, as distinct from research interviews were intended to be 'real conversations' where the focus was '*those interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives (and) have the potential for creating transformational experiences for the person.'* (Denzin, 1989: 15) and in so doing, potentially lead to meaningful narratives both explicit and implicit. Historically, too, women have used conversation with other women as a way to deal with their oppression (Madriz, 2000: 839).

Research conversations in the study comprise both those at the initial briefing meeting and the ongoing individual narrative conversations around the creative images, afterwards termed 'creative narrative conversations.'

(i) Initial briefing meetings: These lasted no more than twenty minutes and were concerned primarily to allow participants to explore any issues relating to their engagement in the study, including the option to withdraw should they have had second thoughts. If still committed to proceeding, we negotiated how we might progress on an individual basis (including timetabling meetings) and I covered what I considered to be key ethical issues of the study, including confidentiality, security of personal data, validity checking and the potential for emotional stimulation through the research process.

***(ii) Creative narrative conversations*:** Attention has been drawn to the degree of complementarity that increasingly exists between the two activities of research and psychotherapy (Goldstein, 1982, West, 1998a, West 1998b, West, 2001). The methods in this study are based on an array of activities, arising from a counselling, art therapy and personal development orientation that has been part of my professional portmanteau for years. I therefore considered that in a particular combination and within a particular ambience this should serve as a means to stimulate fresh awareness, cognitions and feelings within the narrative genre.

The creative narrative conversations lasted anything from 1-2 hours. They were carried out in a room in the university, free from interruptions and tape-recorded by agreement. (As part of the initial agreement, a participant could ask me to turn off the tape at any time during our conversations). The narrative conversations were participant-centred and in-depth, providing opportunities for each participant to

discuss with me their experience, understandings, reflections and interpretations arising from each of their creative pieces.

Unstructured or non-directive interviews originating as they do from therapeutic fields (particularly the pioneering work of Freud) are reputed to elicit highly personal data in such a way to increase self-awareness and improve people's skills in self-analysis (Madge, 1965). For this reason, and because my belief was that less consciously prescribed direction by me would potentially lead to freer, less conscious processing, these research interviews were largely unstructured. Having said that, creative art in such a context of listening has a tendency to provide focus and bring inherent structure to any discourse. Thus, while I had originally planned to have a number of common thematic elements central to each interview, by the time the study proper started, my commitment became to follow and understand the meanings (not just rational but also emotional) by the participants as they occurred, and, through the use of whatever eclectic counselling skills I possess, to help each participant articulate the stories and 'shadow' stories they wished to tell through the conversations. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 109), conversation entails listening. As such, in-depth listening has the power in a trusting situation to *'probe into experience that takes the representation of experience beyond what is possible in an interview.'*

Nevertheless, I was well aware of background scepticism and repudiation of such a 'therapeutic' style of engagement as mine by sociologists such as Atkinson (1997) and Atkinson and Silverman (1997), who condemn the revelation of any personal experience and the methodology of face-to-face, empathic interviews that elicit these as 'vulgar realism' and unworthy of social science.

Despite the fact that each of the four participants started naturally in the first research conversation with the time-line, the order and depth to which they focused their attention on any of the remaining three creative artefacts was directed by them and there were times when the synchrony between two and three pieces was being considered simultaneously during our conversation.

In order to ensure that there was 'closure' on the total experience for the participants, an opportunity for follow-up contact was provided, approximately one

month after the final research conversation had taken place for reassurance that there had been no negative impact as a result of the research experience. Draft scripts were also sent to the participants to allow initial validity checks on any analysis, interpretation and presentation as well as correction, feedback and closure (Appendix 2).

Creative image-making

Participants engaged in a variety of creative tasks in workshop settings on two separate occasions (Saturdays) in the art therapy studio of the university. These workshops were group-based, carefully contracted and facilitated by me permitting an extended period of time to engage in creative art-making on tasks related to the study.

Illustration 1: Images from the creative workshops

(i) Autobiographical Time-Line

The autobiographical time-line is a simple line drawing through which participants represent any personally and/or professionally significant (positive or negative) life events from early experience to present day and sometimes on to an anticipated future. There has been a growing interest in critical incident analysis in teacher research (Measor, 1985; Tripp, 1993) although the focus tends to have been on how external professional factors impinge on teachers' identities and actions or indeed on the impact of personal life events, both conscious and unconscious.

Drawing lifelines or timelines also has been used clinically as an effective therapeutic tool in a variety of treatment settings. Martin (1997; 2003) describes how art therapists (Rhyne, 1973: Landgarten, 1981; Robbins, 1994) have used the lifeline as

an art task using symbolic images in a variety of different media. Martin herself (op cit.) uses them not just therapeutically but in a diagnostic research manner to correlate the relationship between line quality and emotions in psychiatric populations.

The temporal dimension is also important in therapy generally and White & Epston (1990) refer to Bateson (1972, 1979) having demonstrated how the mapping of events though time is essential for detecting change. In 1990, unaware of their use in art therapy, I developed the idea of using autobiographical time-lines symbolically and creatively as a means of representing significant outer life events and corresponding emotional experience for use within a counselling module on personal development. This initiative was based on the view that constructing a creative lifeline was likely to promote clarification and better understanding of events and feelings from early memory to present day.

The aim of this element of the study, then, was to encourage participants to explore creatively, using arts-based methods, their autobiography through a time-line. The time-line traditionally would be considered as linear but participants were permitted to use whatever image, metaphor or pattern that seemed most appropriate by using any media and to indicate, where possible, inner emotions which paralleled external events.

(ii) Mask construction

There is a complex relationship between the inner worlds of individual consciousness and the portrayals to the external world, including the adaptations that have to be made. One metaphorical way of considering the multifaceted interface is to experiment with the concept of 'mask'. Masks have played a peculiar and powerful role in the development of consciousness, culture and spirituality throughout the ages (Hopcke, 1995). The masks we present to the world are considered to be practical compromises, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression on others and yet, on the other hand, to conceal the true nature of the individual, much of which may be unconscious. Hopcke (1995: 7) describes the mask, called *persona* in Jungian terms, as '*the place in the personality where public and private meets…' 'what goes on behind the mask is …called 'private life'*

(Jung 1928: 305) and there may be a situation in which '*the excellence of the mask is compensated by* the '*private life' going on behind it.*' (Jung, 1983: 95).

The use of mask-making and mask work in art therapy is widespread. Particularly within the Jungian tradition (Barry, 2003) mask–making is being used to work with a variety of client groups (Russell, 1986). Within art therapy, mask-making requires the making of an 'embodied image' which Schaverien (1992: 86) describes as holding *'powerful feelings that have been …expressed in its making and can be imbued with life and emotion.*'

The stimulus for the use of masks in the current research process was originally as a modification of McMurray's (1990: 62) work in which she outlines a task in which an image of the face (or persona) is created and explored in terms of what it protects and hides. This task was adapted for personal development work with counsellors during the early 1990s by encouraging the making of three-dimensional, wearable masks that also had the potential to express the feelings of the wearer on the inside as well as what was presented to the external world. Masks also affirm as well as protect and so the mask, unlike McMurray's perspective (op cit), is not viewed as solely defensive but as having been developed out of necessity over time and therefore has much that needs affirmed. In a small-scale study, I have already employed masks to research personal and professional identities (Leitch, 2001) and found that mask-work revealed schisms between teachers' personal-emotional and professional lived experience.

The task for this creative research activity was that each participant was asked to think about the face they present in their lives as a teacher and to create, using craft materials, a three-dimensional image of this 'persona', that they feel they wear most of the time. They were asked to consider symbolizing not solely the outer 'felt' experience but also the inner, should this also seem relevant since *'each person also has an inner face which is always sensed but never seen.'* (O'Donohue, 1997: 15).

Subsequently, each participant had the opportunity to wear ('perform') their mask and to engage in a dialogue with others about the images they had constructed and any feelings generated.

(iii) Self-system pictures

Kelchtermans (1993a; 1993b; 2001) explores the relationship between the individual and the organization in the context of teaching. He adopts an interactionist and constructionist notion of self, where the job is a very important element in the definition of self and where his focus is the notion of the 'professional self':

> 'We define the self as a complex, multidimensional and dynamic system of representations (meanings) which develops over time and is a result of the interactions between the subject and its environment.'
>
> (Keltchermans, 1993a: 443)

This creative task was aimed at exploring the 'felt relationship' between the teacher-participant and their current work organization. Most literature neglects the fact that irrational forces operate in organizations and individuals:

> 'Gaining access to members' organizational experience helps us better understand individual and collective motives that govern their behaviour.'
>
> (Diamond, 1993: 78).

Moxnes (1998) identifies that organizations leave their mark on us but, in order to feel that our identity is really ours, and not just something laid upon us from outside, it is essential that also we set our mark on the organization. If this does not happen, he argues, we become soon invisible to the organization, and thereby also to ourselves, which means we lose our identity.

> 'We therefore have to separate out the concepts we use for discerning the unconscious life of the organization from those we can use for discerning the unconscious life of an individual - only in this way can we ever understand how they are interrelated.'
>
> (Moxnes, 1998: 287)

The aim of the self-system picture was, therefore, to explore how the teacher-participants represented or symbolized themselves in relation to their school or educational organization. Although there is some research and development work emerging in the use of visual metaphors and visual and art representations to explore the dynamics and power structures within organizations (Miller & Boisot, 2002; Morgan, 1998), self-system picture work was developed by myself and my counselling colleague in the early 1980s as a means to explore, within university-

based courses, school counsellors, careers teachers and pastoral teachers experiences' within their organizations. Systems theory (Bateson, 1971; Hoffman, 1981; Skynner,1986) was used a model to explore the cognized and uncognized dynamics of the organization. The self-system picture was incorporated in this study for its potential to tap these uncognized elements of professional experience.

The participants were asked simply to express themselves, through paint or drawing, in relation to their place of work and to include whatever features or personnel they felt were important in this image but including themselves, without thinking too consciously about the task.

(iv) Self box

Janesick (1998) suggests that qualitative researchers can use a 'YaYa Box' or 'Self Box' as a research technique, one borrowed from art therapy and also recommends that researchers themselves should engage in such art-making as a form of 'stretching exercise.' The making of a Self Box according to Janesick, (op. cit.) can serve to *'represent a person's innermost self on the inside of the box and the outward self on the outside of the box.'* (p50). This creative research activity was originally adapted by me in the 1990s for teaching purposes from Frings Keyes'(1983: 14) art technique in which she describes the making of a Self Box as forming *'a visible graphic record of your perception of you'* and where reality is integrated with fantasy.

The making of self-boxes was introduced in this study to explore with participants if they would, consciously or unconsciously, create a holistic representation of their self capable of symbolizing different 'sides' to the self, (identities) and any relationship between both internal and external. In addition, there was the possibility of exploring with participants the concept of whether or not they felt they retained a sense of 'core self' over time. In creating the self-box, participants had the opportunity to deepen their reflections on aspects of their self and the influences of these on their personal and professional development.

The participants were asked to select a cardboard box and using creative materials create a Self-box that they felt represented their experience of themselves in whatever way felt most appropriate.

Autoethnography

> 'Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.'
>
> (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 739)

Autoethnography is difficult to define precisely and is often associated with a range of terms such as personal narratives (Richardson, 1994), personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989), interpretive biography (Denzin, op cit.), narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and confessional tales (Van Maanen, 1988). Readers will already be aware from my initial tale how my first autoethnographic account was stimulated. However, I suppose that the move from 'locating myself in the text' to 'being in the text' really started with my reading of Carolyn Ellis' (1995) *Final Negotiations.* Although occasionally irked by the slow pace, I was also very moved by this personal form of academic writing. I found myself frustrated to discover at this stage in my academic development that this type of writing had been going on in sociology (not even psychology!) and I had known nothing of it. There are those who would argue (Atkinson & Silverman, op cit.) that what I have engaged in is not strictly autoethnography since I have privileged the personal, been too 'confessional' and have insufficiently theorized, categorized or analysed the social and cultural. While I am highly sensitive to the claim that what I have been engaged in is a *'romantic construction of the self'* (Atkinson & Silverman, op cit.), I took on my autobiographical writing as a genuine challenge – a search for 'voice' and personal meaning-making. But also, in my radical way, I wanted to explore and promote multiple forms of representation and research, since like Bochner's (2001: 135) 'gut-feeling', mine, too, is that: *'autoethnographies are being contested mainly because they threaten the privilege that has traditionally been granted to orthodox, analytical social science.'*

5.8 Ethical issues

> 'Qualitative research is an ethical endeavour.'
>
> (Ely et al, 1991: 218)

By definition, qualitative research is research through which we seek to understand more fully our fellow human beings (ibid: 219). With such a human quest, come issues of ethical conduct. While we have a variety of guidelines for educational research (British Educational Research Association (BERA) revised ethical guideless, 2003, American Educational Association Guidelines (AERA), I would tend to support Miles and Huberman (1994: 289) when they state that *'there is still no well-formulated set of ethical guidelines usable by qualitative researchers across a range of disciplines'*. By this I mean that there are additional circumstances that require serious reflection when conducting naturalistic studies where risk is difficult to predict *a priori*. Studies which seek to undertake the narrative study of lives clearly fall within this category and issues emerge which do not consistently find easy answers in the standards or guidelines prescribed. In particular, the emotionally-involved presence of the narrator-researcher, concerns over authorship, alongside the emergent nature of narrative design presents situations that continue to demand resolution beyond the prevalent standards of: preserving confidentiality, protecting participants from harm, and providing informed consent (a conundrum in itself when the study is one of exploration and discovery rather than validation!). Narrative research is therefore an ethical endeavour in itself and one where the narrative researcher must often *'trust in our own gut feelings about what is right in the immediate situation'* or end up in a *'snake-swamp'* (Price, 1996: 207).

Lieblich (1996) draws a distinction between research, which is traditionally impersonal and therapy where intimate matters are often revealed but at the will of the client. Narrative research on peoples' lives (and similar within the counselling research domain) frequently touches the intimate but at the invitation of the researcher. Norms of ethical behaviour for counsellors and therapists are highly articulated in our culture (e.g. British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ethical framework for practitioners) and more importantly perhaps, counsellors and therapists are trained and supervised to work within a code of ethics to ensure that risk to clients is minimized because of the emotional and meaningful

relationship that usually emerges between the two sides when engaged in counselling or therapy. Narrative researchers, however, are unlikely to be in the position of having access to both models unless they fall into the overlapping category of being both narrative researcher and qualified therapist, such as Lieblich (1996), Josselson (1996b) and Etherington (1995; 2000; 2001).

Fundamentally, it could be argued that there was an issue of power differential throughout the research process right from the initial request. Although facilitation within the module had appeared easy and relaxed with a lot of mutual sharing and openness between myself and the module participants, the request to participate was however coming from a module tutor and indeed, head of school, a university school at which they were enrolled students. Speedy (1998) talks of 'ascribed', 'owned' and 'disguised' power as part of a three-dimensional model for the research endeavour. I have difficulty perceiving my own power and am dismissive of my role-status therefore have a tendency to underplay or disguise power which may have been ascribed to me by the potential participants. I was sensitive to the issue that students on the module who did not elect to participate might also have feared being disadvantaged, consciously or unconsciously by me in any future assessment.

My hope and belief was that the students would have built sufficient trust in me and therefore I articulated and tried to allay what I thought might have been an unspoken fear (reinforced by the university's anonymous marking scheme) before they completed the consent slips. The counter-side of this is that there was the potential for a number of the participants to project on to me too much 'therapeutic' power ('the magic power of insight') as a result of my style of working during the module, with the possibility for a mismatch in expectations arising. Having obtained university ethical approval in principle, the preparatory meeting was a *rite of passage* that provided me the opportunity to make some transition so that the participants were clearer that it was their stories, spoken and unspoken, and creative art that I was interested in them sharing with me, rather than me being in an educative or therapeutically facilitative role, although some of these type of responses might inadvertently be stimulated through the narrative conversations.

The more standard ethical considerations of the research context were also considered and prepared carefully in advance. Referring to Lofland and Lofland's

(1984) four-fold framework, the following issues were addressed in the context of this study:

Preserving anonymity

The essence of 'anonymity' is that information provided should in no way reveal participants' identity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 61). Given the uniquely personal autobiographical and sensitive material which was likely to be derived from the research process in this study, it was essential that the participants' privacy be ensured through an agreed 'contract' on confidentiality. Names would not be included and participants were asked to suggest an alias or pseudonym during the research process for inclusion in the individual narrative extracts. Importantly, any potentially identifying material arising in the analysis was also 'member-checked' (as well as validated) by each participant before publication or dissemination (after Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although I can try to be as secure as this as possible, I have to accept that there is no guarantee of total anonymity as far as narrative and life studies are concerned (Plummer, 1983). I discussed this potentiality with the participants in the context that living in a small country, and existing within educational circles, it is virtually impossible to disguise with such certainty that recognition is impossible (unlike Josselson, 1996a; 1996b: 62) without distorting the text completely. The best we could arrive at was that the participants were happy at what was being presented from their narratives. The greater the sensitivity of the information, the more safeguards are called for to protect the privacy of the research participants and, in the context of this study, where unconscious or previously unacknowledged emotional elements are explored means that it was important for participants to have sufficient time to consider and check what was to be presented from our work together.

Being aware of the effects (however unintended) of the research process

> 'The very naivety of many research participants makes it more imperative that we are careful to protect them.'
>
> (Ely et al, 1991: 223)

Perhaps this is one of the most ethically sensitive elements of this study. Participants were invited to engage in a personal, introspective process with each other in aspects of the workshops and with the researcher through ongoing research

conversations. Because of the autobiographical nature of the study and the narrative exploration itself which, by definition, was designed to lead to self-revelation, neither the researcher nor the participants could predict at the outset what issues, experiences or indeed emotions might arise during or after the process.

> 'Growth in self-awareness is in itself an ethical undertaking.'
>
> (Ely et al, 1991: 221)

As a result, there were a number of safeguards in place, the first of which was the opportunity for informed (written) consent arising from the preparatory interview. Secondly, there was an opportunity to debrief at the end of the research process. During the research study, including the structured, creative workshop sessions, opportunities were taken to check with participants. Any concerns arising were also addressed during the one-to-one interviews and in any reflective journal writing which was offered to the researcher. The spirit of enquiry placed the needs of the participants as priority. From the outset, it was made clear that participants could suspend or withdraw from the research process at any point, where they judged any part of the experience to be affecting them adversely.

McCue et al (1998) indicate that those who work in the autobiographical mode are prone to the criticism of *'practising therapy without a license'* (p63) whilst still recognizing that some forms of self-reflection can indeed prove to be therapeutic. They remain concerned about the ethical issues in teachers' autobiographies being made public since they argue, even when they are anonymous the teachers are vulnerable to the research judgments being made. On the other hand, Braud (1998) suggests that there is undeniable evidence that recognizing and sharing personal experiences, especially an individual's '*previously unvoiced experiences, are beneficial to...psychological well-being'* (p43/44). And, Etherington (2001) notes a growing body of literature (including, Rennie, 2000) *'that recognizes the therapeutic value for clients of participating in research'* (p119).

Impact of researcher presence in the research setting

> 'In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument: there are no reliability and validity coefficients for the researcher who is observing and interviewing participants...'
>
> (Brown, 1988: 95)

Finally it is important to say a word about the role of ethics in autoethnography. As this area of research and inquiry expands it will be necessary to consider the specific nuances of self-care and care of others in relation to personal narratives. At present very little detailed guidance is available in the literature (Ellis, 2001; Etherington, (in press)). We have to be careful in 'reclaiming ourselves' (Frank, 1995) that we do not violate others by unawarely including information about them (Morse, 2000: 1159). In my own account in chapter one, I was able to permit the main actors in my story to read a draft of my account (a challenge in itself); however, there was another whom a large part of the story centred around unfavourably. I could not bring myself to discuss this with him and in the end, anonymized and edited the specifics of this episode.

5.9 Representation and interpretation of narrative accounts

> 'The moment of beginning to write a research text is a tension-filled time.'
>
> (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 139)

Narratives of personal experience centring on creative art-based research activities (creative representations) and reflections on these are in written (journal, log) and oral (reflective conversation) form, thus presenting a wide variety of narrative genres and a huge volume of potential field texts. These accounts will be telling us about experiences, past, present and anticipated futures, real and imagined, remembered, forgotten, and half-forgotten and how the participants understand the meaning and consequence of these in terms of their personal and professional identities.

The transition from field text to research text, however, is a difficult one at best as Clandinin and Connelly (op cit.) recognise and I remain puzzled as to the best way in which to honour the integrity and voice of the participants while at the same time wanting to present something of personal and social significance without losing my own academic and personal voices. Thereby, here I am:

> 'trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants storied experiences and to represent their voices.'
>
> (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 147)

On the one hand, I want much of the field texts to speak for themselves and on the other hand, I cannot stop there, since my inquiry is designed to portray and construct 'unconscious' meanings within those texts. Fortunately, being able to present illustrations of the teachers' creative images will in some measure respect their art as central to their voice (McNiff, 1987).

In addition, researching unconscious by its very nature is paradoxical - once captured it is, of course, conscious. Thus, I am acutely perplexed that presenting stories of 'unconscious' is akin to being a 'ghostbuster' trying to photograph the elusive as evidence - interesting night-job but highly questionable and hard to do credibly. Also there is no guarantee that the equipment to hand will be sufficient to the task!

Multi-layered text is what I am aiming for in terms of presentation, some type of 'creative synthesis' (Moustakas, 1990) or 'bricolage' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) but it is difficult and perhaps foolhardy to anticipate in any precise way how unconscious processes will be mapped or represented:

> 'Since there are multiple ways of knowing and interpreting data, the possibility of discovering a universal, transcendent truth…about the unconscious…is challenged.'
>
> (Slattery, 2001: 22).

My desire then is to capture the participants' experience, both conscious, unconscious and at the borderland in innovative and compelling forms which will result in a complex layering of the stories. Thus, excerpts of participants' stories, first-person accounts, illustrations of their personal images representing their multiple voices will be interleaved with my interpretive analytic account of *'how humans in conscious and unconscious ways process their experiences of life and act on them'* (Nielsen, 1999: 45) to construct their identities, in this case teacher identities. Like the confectionery 'Hundreds and Thousands' (Carr, 1978), I aim to compose the research text by looking for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, new insights, nuclear episodes, tacit knowings, emotional intensities and the previously unthought or unknown either within and occasionally across an individual's experience. Whatever form of presentation the research text will finally take, it is likely to be unorthodox, including the use of artwork, poetic representation and dialogue as well as interpretive analysis.

I suppose by this point in the study, I find I am becoming fairly unapologetic for grasping this *'other side of the dialectic between the individual and the social'* (Nielsen ibid: 47). I am taking the psychological perspective because, despite all that I had read anew in the post-modern and poststructuralist landscape, it seems to me that *'to ignore deep motivation in the formation and transformation of culture is to miss an important dimension in our species.'* (Obeyesekere, 1990: 287).

5.10 Issues of validity

> 'To put the point pithily, neither subjectivity nor objectivity has an exclusive stranglehold on truth. But why then should objectivity be preferred if it is not guaranteed to lead to the truth.'
>
> (Phillips, 1973 in Hammersley, 1993: 61).

It feels important to end this chapter by referring briefly to a few of the many issues concerning validity in the narrative field. Although qualitative research has gained more widespread acceptance since the 1980's when researchers had to spend inordinate amounts of time counteracting criticism about the lack of validity and generalizability in qualitative research (Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999), issues of validity still arise. Conceptions of reliability and validity as used by experimental researchers (e.g. Campbell & Stanley, 1963) still raise questions about the nature of evidence and imply some kind of impersonal truth, 'one' truth. Post-modern thought is more suggestive of a continuum between error and truth, advancing as it does the notion of multiple realities. The question, therefore, in terms of validity for this study is how to check the accuracy of accounts and interpretations on unconscious data, which are by definition not directly observable, fleeting and at times, frankly, impressionistic. Only post-hoc inferences can be determined (McMillan, 1991) with all the associated indeterminacy!

I have three counteractions at this stage: (i) interestingly, despite their interpretive basis, art-based and symbolization methods are projected as being more honestly aligned and in harmony with unconscious processes. Clinical evidence (Wilber, 2000) also suggests that people who are given access to these methods in a safe, structured environment are more likely to access previously unconscious material in the form of memories, dreams and reflections, (Jung, 1963); (ii) beyond the integrity of the images, participants provide their own interpretive (storied) accounts of how they

experience unconscious and also screen my interpretations for validity. Kermode (1985) argues however that a narrative is never true or false but only something that contributes to 'narrative intelligibility'; (iii) Personal bias is ubiquitous in research (as well as life) although it is possible to minimize, if not eliminate a great deal of it, through careful self-examination and questioning the sources of personal assumptions. This self-checking is one of the fundamental purposes of my ongoing autobiographical writing.

> 'Phenomenology ends with the essence of experience: heuristics retain the essence of the person in experience.'
>
> (Douglas & Moustakas, quoted in West 1998b: 61)

In this inquiry, then, which is both heuristic and interpretive, the subjectivity of both the participants and also my self is crucial. In this sense, validity must concern itself with the knower and what is known, a collaborative encounter between my own experience, the others' experience and the(ir) outside/inside world(s). This requires a multi-level perspective:

> 'like binocular vision which enables us to see in 3-D because of the differential between the two images…(this) enables the brain to compute the 'invisible dimension.'
>
> (Maruyama, 1981: 18).

In whatever way it happens, it is a passionate affair.

CHAPTER 6: CREATIVE NARRATIVES

6.1 Introduction: approaching the unsayable; doing the unthinkable!

> '...the most common strategy for writing up life document research: get your subject's own words, come to really grasp them from the inside and then turn it yourself into a structured and coherent statement that uses the subject's words in places and the social scientist's in others but does not lose their authentic meaning.'
>
> (Plummer, 1983: 111).

I approach this chapter with some hesitation in terms of entering the heart of the paradox. Here I have four teacher participants; I have their images; I have their various texts (written and spoken); I have my own thoughts. How can I do justice to them in terms of the thesis? Yes, I can present their stories, to illustrate layers of their meanings. But what I have tasked myself with is also to narrate unconscious dimensions within the stories of their identities as teachers:

> 'Paradoxically, in our interpretations, we still cannot speak what is unsaid.'
>
> (Rogers et al., 1999: 79)

I struggled with the possibilities of exploring in separate chapters what each creative activity uniquely unearthed across each of the four participants but then was persuaded that a more holistic or layered account of each participant's creative narrative as 'bricolage' or 'montage' (Denzin & Lincoln, op cit.) would allow integrity and an interplay of meaning between the various creative images of identity, thereby preserving 'narrative unity' (after Connelly & Clandinin,1986: 297):

> 'Montage uses brief images to create a clearly defined sense of urgency and complexity. ...the images seem to shape one another, and an emotional gestalt effect is produced.'
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 5)

In going this direction, my hope is that I will be able to do four things;

(i) present some of the main structures underpinning each participant's creative narrative of identity through their images, own words, some excerpts from our research conversations, including the identification of previously unthought sources in the formation of identity;

(ii) illuminate how each participant stories the way in which unconscious operates in their life and identity;

(iii) reveal where possible, the processes by which narrative elements are represented in consciousness through symbolic means and finally,

(iv) depict how the symbolic, imagistic form of the creative images permits access to larger narrative pieces, multiple meanings (particularly emotional) which do not seem easily accessible through language alone.

Through the introduction and presentation of each individual participant, their images and their reflections, excerpts from our conversations, my goal is to respond to the first three aspirations [(i)-(iii)] above. Aspiration (iv) should be provided in part by the overall characterization of each participant's creative narrative but will also be discussed as a major theme within the final chapter.

I now turn to each of the participants (Fionnuala, Kathy, Daisy and Tricia) to present their creative narratives, both conscious and unconscious. I locate them briefly in their biographies, provide their views on entering teaching and any current professional issues which they feel are presenting themselves. This is followed by their creative narratives arising from the experience of the autobiographical time-line, mask-work, self-system picture and self-box. Some aspects of their journal-work are transposed into stanza-form for dramatic effect.

6.2 Fionnuala: Creative narrative (I)

Fionnuala teaches science to A-level in a large rural, all-girls grammar school and undertakes a number of pastoral duties. She is an only child, in her mid-30s and lives by herself in her own home.

In the Northern Ireland selective school system, Fionnuala would be considered to be in a 'successful school', with good examination results and her own contribution to the school's profile of results would be considered strong. She is presently undertaking a masters course of study (for which she drives a round trip of 140miles to attend weekly 'twilight' classes). She describes herself as having gone into teaching vocationally:

> 'I just always wanted to – it was like it was always there, you know. I want to be a teacher!'

On the face of it, Fionnuala's professional story is a successful one. However, once we engaged in the process of the creative narrative inquiry, a series of deeper issues gradually surfaced, which had been of concern to Fionnuala for some period of time. These revealed an oppositional view within her personal and professional selves that is epitomized in a number of Fionnuala's reflexive statements below:

> 'I am sort of struggling with the teaching and thinking about other routes, maybe moving into a counselling support route in the school but I do actually like teaching most of the time, it might just be that I don't like what I am teaching. I would rather be doing drama or something, more creative.'
>
> 'It's drudgery, you know. There is no enjoyment in it or there is very little in it. I mean you get the odd spark and I know the best teachers don't get it every single day. You know you get loads of ok days and then once in a blue moon, you get something that happens and you think, 'Yes, that went really well today' or, somebody comes back and says 'thank-you' or 'I enjoyed that' and you think, 'Gosh, I must be doing something alright'. But I am not getting anywhere near enough at the minute.'

Fionnuala's narrative of identity, then, became less and less a passive telling of 'remembrances past' to an impartial, external researcher and more actively concerned to work out through the research process her genuinely-felt concerns regarding her future direction. In presenting aspects of her narrative, I am keen to preserve the integrity of Fionnuala's engagement with her 'quest' through the creative images as she moved backwards and forwards with me in her understanding of the meanings that the symbolic representations had for her. At the same time, I

have also tasked myself subsequently with listening for her story of the role of 'unconscious' within her narrative of identity.

The creative theme which emerged in three of her images (mask, self-system and self-box) was the symbolic portrayal of two divergent intrapsychic characters (internal voices), who appeared to be in a conflict over agency and control. Order versus freedom and isolation versus sociability were the main contradictions of identity that threaded through and which were being enacted within this struggle for supremacy. Internal dialogue (self-talk) made conscious and externalized (through conversation, image and enactment) becomes one of the main features of Fionnuala's search for future identity.

6.2.i Fionnuala: Autobiographical timeline

Description of Fionnuala's timeline

Fionnuala's autobiographical time line is characterized by a thick green line running horizontally across the page in landscape format. The line bifurcates, ending with question marks to the right-hand side of the picture. On the upper side of the line are a range of symbols associated with events and external influences that Fionnuala considered significant in her life and identity, including a dead grandfather, schools attended as a pupil, a significant relationship, university and two schools where she has been a teacher over the past ten years. On the lower-side of the line, Fionnuala uses symbols (teardrops, smiling sun, ton-weight, fireworks, cloaked-man, box, half-full jar of nectar and question marks) to represent her emotional responses (as recalled). These include grief, contentment, tears, heaviness, passion, depression, restriction, balanced hopefulness.

Written Reflections on the autobiographical time-line

The timeline offers some clues,

a lack of people,

a fear of what people might think about me,

a lack of significant people in my life,

again, a fear of being hurt.

The heaviness and sadness during secondary schooling
represented by the heavy weight and teardrops

- *the fear of not getting on with others,*
- *being the loner,*
- *always on the edge of things,*
- *always so different.*
- *I can see no fun or enjoyment during this time*
- *and I see this reflected also in my school*
- *in the self-system picture*

In our various research conversations, subsequently, Fionnuala spent time on each of the aspects of her story symbolized on her autobiographical time-line. What became clear from an early stage in our discussions was that Fionnuala was really focused less on telling and more on understanding. The narration was purposeful in terms of trying to work out where she is going and what she wants out of her life, particularly in relation to her emotional life. She describes it as :

> 'Journeying into the past while viewing the future yet trying to remain rooted in the present moment. Trying to make sense of me and how the past has made me what I am today and how I continue to grow

and shed layers of protection, of armour that I have built around me over the years.'

Research conversation 1

Fionnuala: I was surprised at the things that had come up that had never come up before when I had been looking at the line.

Ruth: For example what things stood out for you?

Fionnuala: The influence of my grandfather, the first day going to secondary school in not knowing where I was going, that was a big one.

Ruth: It sounds like our last meeting shook things in some kind of way.

Fionnuala: It moved things about…like a few slates had been knocked off the roof…I talked about being in my box and that is what this wee box is supposed to be (referring to time-line). I could feel myself that week literally wanting to get into 'the box', a cupboard, close the door, so I wouldn't have to engage with anybody and that was scary.

Ruth: I am wondering if there is some anger at having engaged voluntarily in a process that has unsettled you.

Fionnuala: Not anger at this, but huge amounts of anger floating around, more right out there every time I opened my mouth…then something clicked in me. Every time I go to move or there is some sort of change, the resistance is always there trying to hold me back putting me down in my place, in my box – *'get you back the way you were. You don't need to be thinking you are important or that you will be able to move!* And once I had figured that out in my head, it was like there was two bits of me working away at this.

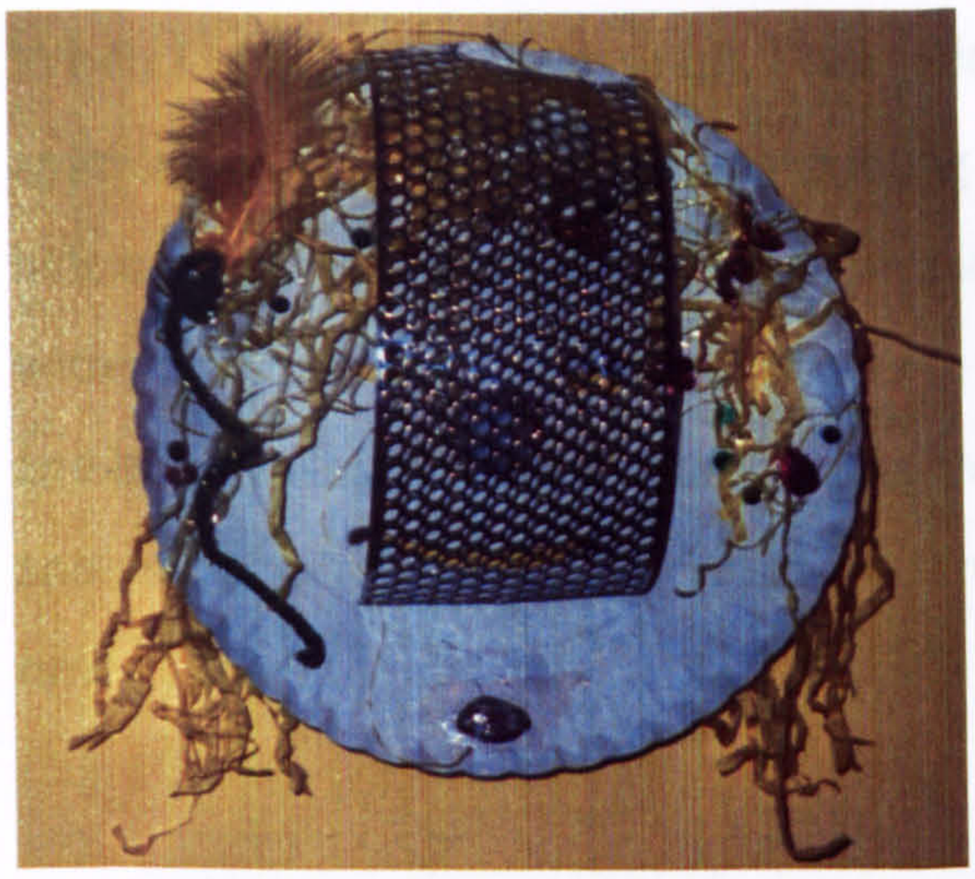
6.2.ii Fionnuala: Masks and personae

Fionnuala outer mask

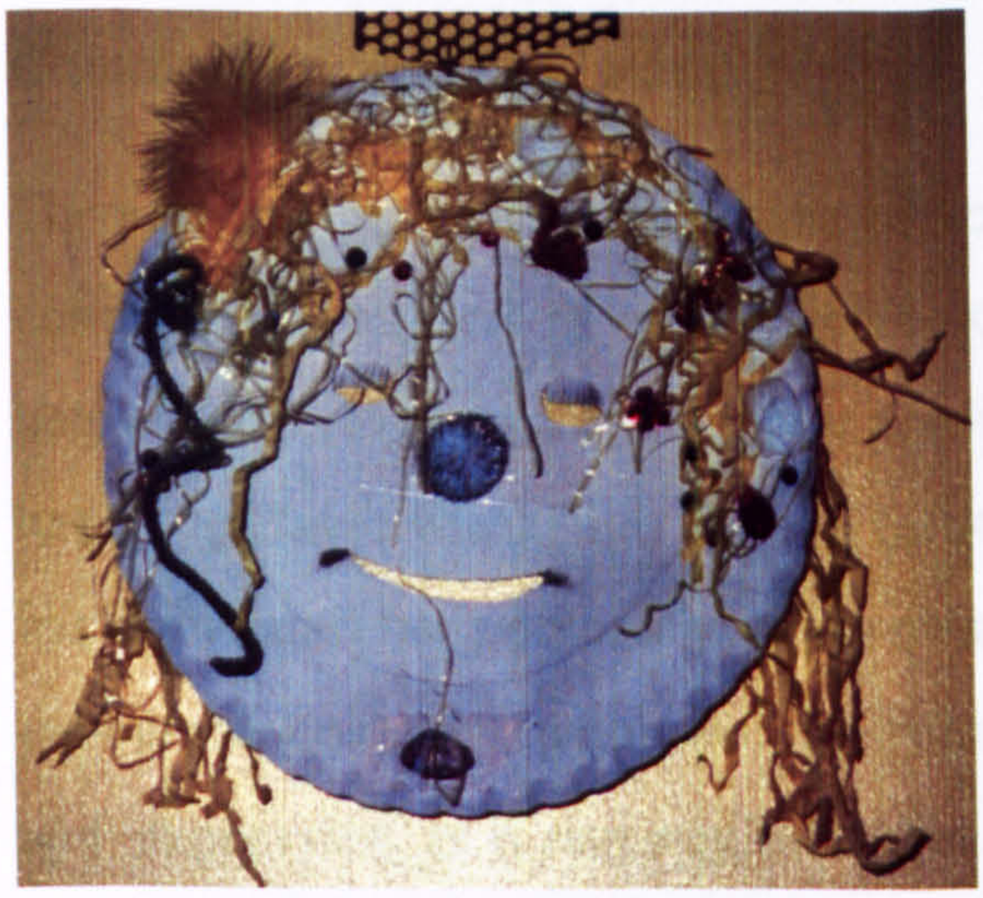
Fionnuala journal reflection 1

Moving from my first school to school two (as a teacher), the giving of myself, the being me in the classroom reduced dramatically. To ensure protection and anonymity I developed a mask, a professional persona. The subject matter still got taught but there was a degree of rigidity and lack of humanness about how I carried out my job. I was aware but only to a small extent how restricted and unfulfilled that left me feeling. Getting the chance through this process (to connect my mask to my lifeline) I am able to pinpoint the areas of restriction and look at the incidents that had made me vulnerable and caused the shut-down of me. Making the mask has given me the insight into how I was in school, how I portrayed my professional self.

My outer mask, 'Miss Prim' is quite orderly, hair neatly to each side, rigidly fixed eyebrows, a smile given so begrudgingly and no colour or bloom. I look carefully into the blandness and the invisible quality of the outer mask – years of making sure I'm not noticed, that I will fit in. The nose is so tight and so shallow – because if I had a proper nose, it might get noticed too much. There is no texture or colour or life in this face. It isn't particularly threatening nor is it very approachable either.



Fionnuala's inner mask with veil



Inner mask unveiled – 'Flexy'

Fionnuala journal reflection 2:

There is nothing significant about this person that would make her stand out or be remembered. I carry this anonymity with me especially in my work I look at the time-line wondering how I have become this bland safe person. I feel disappointed that I have allowed her to develop so fully. I do like her; she has held me safely when I needed it but now I need her to breathe, to live, to enjoy. To break through the fear that constricts her living. To allow the inner mask a chance to be seen - her name, 'Flexy'. As a child I remember the phrase being used about me – she's *'coming out of her box'* – as I began to get less shy. I feel that over the past number of years, I have managed to get back in that box and close the lid as tightly as possible. A safe place with no questions to answer, no-one to hurt me or criticize me.

Looking at the mask there are a few tell-tale signs that 'Flexy', she, my inner mask, is trying to get out: the mischievous, flirtatious eyelashes. The smile may be suppressed at the mouth but the eyes are hinting at what lies beneath.

When I look at the inner mask, I see colours, shapes and textures jumping out – anything goes. There are no constricting eyebrows, the nose sparkles, the smile has a hint of sadness but more realness. This inner mask expresses the freedom longed for within: there is a lot of life and vitality in this person. There is confusion and mess and bubblyness waiting to burst forth. When I wear this mask, I feel more exposed and vulnerable, people will notice me, and it's scary and exhilarating at the same time.

Commentary on mask work:

Through the mask work, Fionnuala personifies what she considers to be two contradictory aspects of herself (selves/identities), both of which have remained below her level of awareness, prior to the mask-work but which she recognizes as having operated within her. One of these selves is rational, conforming and safe, and has dominated her personally and professionally in recent years, the other is more exuberant, colourful, emotional and rebellious and is currently vying for attention and expression, as is also symbolized in her self-system picture.

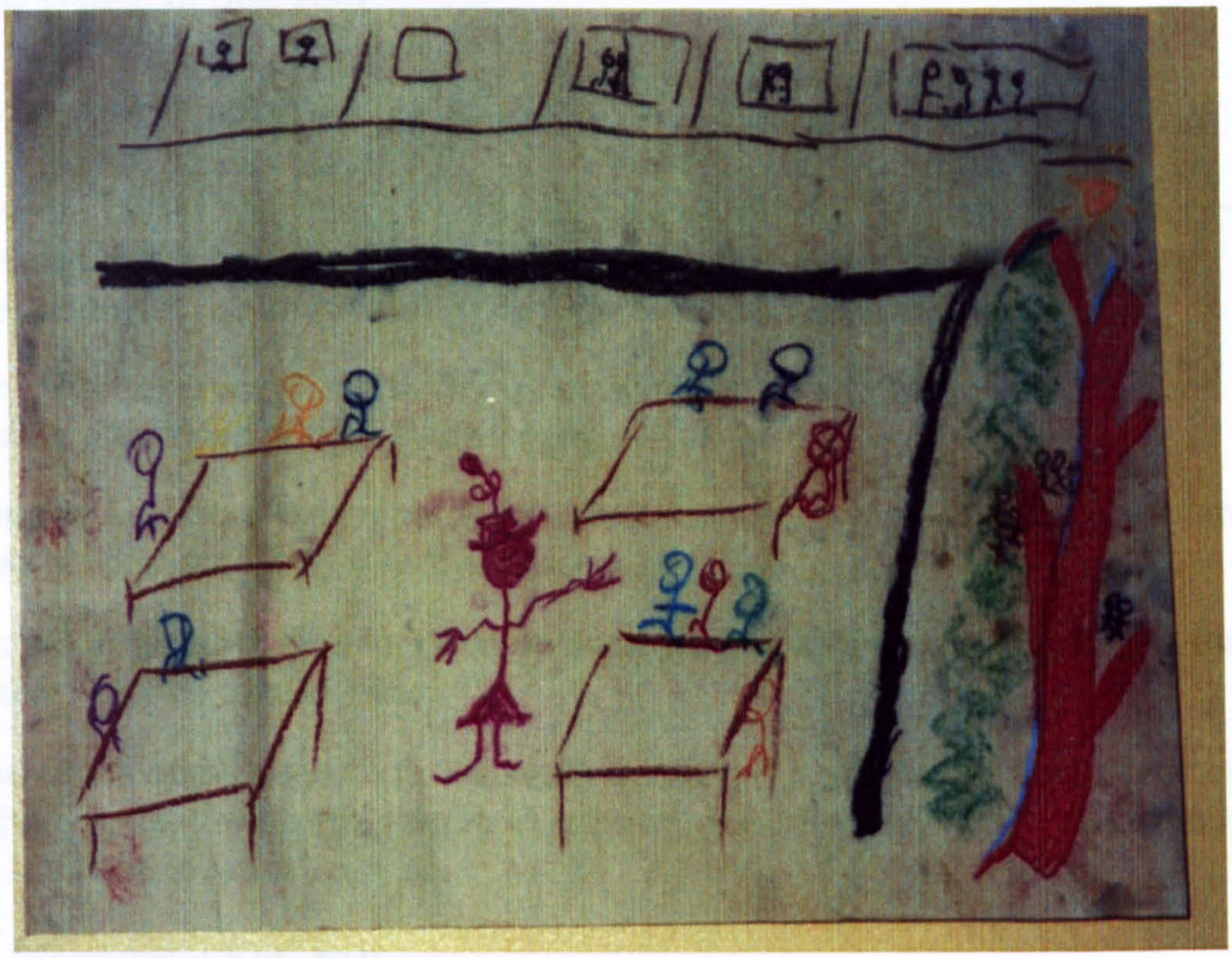
Research conversation 2

Fionnuala: This (Miss Prim) is the one I wear most of the time everywhere

Ruth: It dominates - also in the classroom? So while you love teaching, there is a real question about teaching science.

Fionnuala: It's like I drifted into teaching science you know. Do sciences because that is the thing that will get you the job.

6.2.iii Fionnuala: Self-system picture



Fionnuala journal reflection 3

In the self-system picture, I can see this inner person winning out (a flamboyant Flexy as the central character holding forth as the teacher), I am bright and central to the classroom. Even though there is order, there is some life in the room. The pupils are different colours representing their uniqueness and individuality. I hope in the limited time and opportunity available that I respect each pupil as an individual. However in this climate of achievement statistics and target-setting, there is not always time to devote to the personal development of each one. Inevitably, this leaves me feeling frustrated and sometimes wondering if I'm in the right job. Within the classroom, I have some freedom to try to be real and genuine in the delivery of my subject but beyond the classroom, I blend in and conform.

I still feel relatively comfortable in my classroom; the constrictions and conformity seem to come from the outside. I examined my non-belonging to the institution, which went hand-in-hand with my protective defences. The awareness that came

from this piece was like scales falling from my eyes. I can no longer remain locked into this system of operating.

Research conversation 3

Fionnuala: I was trying to represent all the individuality. That was the different colours and this is sort of the way my room is, you know. There are four big benches and with me in the middle of it performing, I suppose.

Ruth: It is interesting that you drew her like that anyway rather than the one (Miss Prim) that is shackled with the key stages….

Fionnuala: I suppose that is because I think that the only place that I do get to do any wee bit of that (Flexy) is in the classroom

Ruth: So in teaching, you feel that you are pushing kids through a process that ultimately you don't believe in.

Fionnuala: In some ways. You are really thinking is it a waste of time that they, even the brightest, are sitting there in subjects that they don't really care about. There is a limit to what I can do.

6.2.iv Fionnuala: Self-box

Commentary on self-box

Fionnuala's self-box carries on the 'felt sense' of duality in her life experience, the outer sides being more considered, with just the occasional pointer (pink feathers) to the more showy, joyful aspects within. Below the order of her family of 'snow people' and black veil on the outside, the inner box reveals bright colour, erotica, memorabilia, representations of a self, rarely revealed but all placed there embodying stories of personal significance.

Fionnuala's inner box

Fionnuala journal reflections 4

'Isolation is safe but it is also a lonely place to be!'

However this box is stifling me, stopping the essential growth that needs to take place. My defence has outlived its use and the girl in the inside is winning the fight, the struggle to be seen, to be heard, to live in full.

'The box – I am nearly afraid to say this – because the box is a wee bit more hopeful than all the darkness, because that is me as I am now.'

> 'I thought, you see, you do still like teaching and you do still like being in the classroom and you do like all those things but it is so restricting.'
>
> '…one of the things I am looking at now is the whole aspect of loneliness, being alone, being isolated and it is because I have kept that iciness on the outside for a lot of the time and don't let people in...so the whole idea of chipping away at that and turning it around…'

6.2.v Fionnuala: Unearthing unconscious

On immersing myself in Fionnuala's images and our research conversations, I observe three ways in which Fionnuala structures her narrative around attributions to unconscious dimensions but where unconscious remains largely a hidden (but nonetheless powerful) feature. One is the influence of her family of origin; secondly emotional consequences of critical incidents and thirdly, the role attributed to synchronicity. All of these she views as crucial to her identity both personally and professionally.

(i) Family of origin

Initially, Fionnuala is surprised that her grandfather's death appears as significant in the very early part of her time-line. This is a symbol she had not expected to conjure with – a large stick man on her line in her early years, with lots of tears surrounding this. Although Fionnuala's memories of him are vague, she recalls that *'it was a big thing, his death – the first big thing that came to me - but I was surprised as I didn't know he was there'.* She considers now that his significance in her life is the legacy he left her through his impact on her own father and therefore the family dynamic into which she was born. Her understanding is that the grandfather was a strict man, *'very black and white, no shades of grey, very strong-willed'* with poor health and high expectations of his eldest son who went to farm-labour at an early age. Fionnuala reflects that he *' is what made my dad the way he is and which has shaped me because I am quite like him',* in her need for order and precision. Having said that, there are times, she admits '*Daddy would drive me to distraction.'* By contrast she sees her mother as different, a speech and drama teacher, more creative by nature, wanting Fionnuala to be able *'to do all the things that she wasn't able to do'.* As Fionnuala's narrative unfolds through the mask and the self-system picture into the self-box the dynamic tension between these two now consciously experienced aspects of Fionnuala's identity (Miss Prim and Flexy), as foreshadowed in her parents' relative influences, become sharper and more central to a number of ongoing issues for Fionnuala both personally and professionally.

(ii) Nuclear episodes

A number of nuclear episodes or emotionally critical incidents were identified that Fionnuala links to predominant or recurrent emotional patterns in her life, with their associated behaviours and that she feels have significantly shaped her identity. Despite being an only child, with all the attendant sense of 'specialness', Fionnuala identified that early on, by primary school years, she had observed that to draw attention of any kind was not welcomed by peers – it led to criticism and unpopularity. By then, her position in the family had been rather ousted by younger cousins coming to reside for long periods due to their mother's serious illness. Secondary schooling consolidated this transition; it was a nightmare of fitting in, experienced as a permanent 'ton-weight' (also represented in the time-line), which Fionnuala now identifies retrospectively as depression: *'I would have naturally been a*

loner anyway so there was a kind of insulation. Like you know I was just trying to get on with things but sort of blend into the background'. This was an emotional pattern which was to recur when Fionnuala entered her second (current) school as a teacher. Arising from the autobiographical timeline, this centres on the dark-cloaked figure, which Fionnuala felt like a '*vampire had a very seductive quality that can lure you and envelop you, swamp you or swallow you'*. She remains scared of getting caught in the depression and '*never get(ting) out of it'* and during one of the research conversations she challenged the figure directly rather become seduced again:

The dark man: from Fionnuala's autobiographical time-line

Research Conversation 5

Ruth: Can you engage with him? Ask him to turn round.

Fionnuala: Who are you? (to the figure) What do you want? Who are you ?

Ruth: Repeat that. (Point your finger at him)

Fionnuala: Stop dogging me. Go away. Get off me.

Ruth: Good.

Fionnuala: Leave me alone. Back off – out of my life. I have no need of you whatsoever.

Ruth: How does it feel to confront him?

Fionnuala: You know I do… I do give in to it. I try not to but there are times when I just…

Ruth: Just?

Fionnuala: I am looking for the answers as to why it came up this time on February 5th. I came back from school and wanted to get into the cupboard. I could feel the black presence at the end of the bed and I didn't know why it had come or what it was about and then the anger was going on inside me for the next two weeks and I couldn't figure it out….I get to the edge...and then I push it back down and don't deal with any of this stuff, move him away but he is not away. He is only just in the cupboard and then he comes again at another point.

Through giving attention to the 'darker' symbols in the time-line, Fionnuala disclosed previously unspoken (or largely unspoken) fears about latent emotional patterns around depressive feelings which to some extent had dogged her from childhood. These appeared to be linked to her opposing tendencies toward aloneness and isolation, which are in contradistinction to her tendencies towards performance and sociability (as personified by Flexy). Through encouragement to confront a personification of the depression, Fionnuala began to re-negotiate or see the potential to renegotiate her power-relation with this emotional pattern – to take charge rather than be seduced passively. It is also clear from her self-referential language that Fionnuala uses a psychodynamic model as part of how she explains her responses and behaviours to herself. This includes a model of 'repression' in which she sees herself as someone who had had to employ necessary psychological defences.

(iii) Synchronicity

Through exploring various aspects of her creative narrative in the quest for some future direction, Fionnuala refers frequently to a belief in being guided by some form of universal force. For example, she talks of when she is *'looking for the answers for something'* and whenever it is right, *'the books fall off the shelf'*. Viewed naively, synchronistic events seem to be meaningful coincidences between inner and outer events. Jung (1952: para. 965) referred to synchronicity as particular instances of general acausal orderdness *'where the observer is in the fortunate position of being able to recognize the meanings… of psychic and physical equivalences'*. They only become *'meaningful coincidences when an individual experiences them'* (Von Franz,

1991: 272). Von Franz (op cit.) interprets that in the unconscious, there seems to be *a priori* knowledge or immediate presence of events which has no cause and which from time to time irrupts into our 'normal' state. As Fionnuala moves to a position where she is about to make a radical decision about her future direction, she describes herself as being highly sensitive to instances where 'meaning' is becoming conscious. The following extract from a later research conversation exemplifies this:

Research Conversation 6:

Fionnuala: Everything it is like, you know, the coincidence they talk about….synchronicity….yes, everything matching up, everything I looked at, every book I lifted. There was messages in everything, films, just everything you know… just seemed to be saying 'Go for it! Do it! There is something out there!' and once I went in to my boss and said about it, I could feel the weight lifting.

Ruth: I am very interested in the way you kind of look for messages in the environment, in the things that happen that kind of confirm for you whether or not this is the right route….It is almost as if you feel at some level you are unconsciously directed a lot of the time and it is up to you to notice it...does that feel right?

Fionnuala: Yes, it feels like…sometimes you know things in your head, sometimes in your heart. But when the two come together that is when you can do something about it…I do think things happen for a reason you know, I do believe that…I suppose I just mean, I am seeing things in my intuition. Even my teaching has been different since I made the decision.

Denzin (1989) described 'epiphanies of life' as transformational experiences, or turning-points, after which the person will never be quite the same. At our last arranged research meeting, I was surprised and moved when Fionnuala announced breathlessly that she had made a decision not only to take a year out of teaching but had actually set this in motion. This outcome seemed to have emerged as a resolution to some of the narrative confusion and conflicts voiced and imaged through her creative process. When Fionnuala arrived in my room that evening, she depicted the decision-making process, experienced as an epiphany, through a dialogic mode of internal characters and voices, which I now represent from her text in a condensed psychodrama in order *'to capture the processual and emotional details of what happened'* (Ellis & Bochner, 1992: 80).

One Act Play *Fionnuala's epiphany: Voyage of discovery*

Act 1: Scene 1:

Fionnuala: No, my plan is that I have no plan at the moment

Ruth: How did this happen?

Fionnuala: Three years ago since I first thought of it. I just felt so unhappy in my job. Am I in the right job? Doing the right thing ? The final kick in the teeth was when Form 7 didn't appear for their last class…. I became aware that every conversation I had I was complaining about school.

Ruth: You didn't like yourself like that?

Fionnuala: Whenever I came into teaching first and I saw a teacher like that, I said *'I will not be going down that route' 'The first time I see myself going that way, I am out of here: teaching is no place for anybody who is going to sit and moan and give out about it.*'

Scene 2:

Friend: You know, Fionnuala, I thought you were miserable and unhappy and that was what was affecting your teaching but now I am beginning to think that it is your teaching that is making you unhappy – maybe you should get out…

Fionnuala (Miss Prim): Right, O.K. …must think about that….if you see anything, I will be on the look out for something, like a full-time masters – to have some reason to go out…...(Exit friend).

Fionnuala (Flexy); You know I could just take a year off, without having any plan! And just do it for me!

Fionnuala (Miss Prim): Take another year at school, save up and do all the homework, think about the money, think about what you can do….plan.

Fionnuala (Flexy): Just go. Do it now. If you wait another year, you will talk yourself out of it.

Enter Financial adviser: Money can be got around: You could save for a year, it might make you happier - but you know, life is too short and maybe you should just go follow your dream.

Fionnuala: I am shocked!

Scene 3: (One wet Friday morning; two weeks later)

Principal: (just back from teacher exchange): I can't say it's nice to be back – of course, it's nice to be back with you all. ….but Italy was beautiful and there is a life out there.

Fionnuala: Can't do it! Can't do it! Cant' ask her! This is a stupid idea. This is crazy. Catch yourself on. This is not sensible. Not Fionnuala.

(after lunch in Principal's office)

Fionnuala: You know this morning when you said 'there's a life out there…?'

Principal: Well….have you got one?

Fionnuala: No. But I would like to go out and taste, and see what it is like…

Principal: So……You're looking for a year out….There's obviously something greater working here. I am not going to be standing in your way and if you come back you know you are very welcome.

Dénouement

Fionnuala: She was so supportive. And so, this is what I brought with me this evening: my 'voyage of discovery!'

Me: Really!

6.3 Kathy: Creative narrative (II)

Kathy is a primary school teacher (mid-50s) who has in the last two years been promoted as an assistant advisory officer for a local education and library board with special responsibility for general primary education issues. She has a special interest on the personal and social development of pupils at this stage. She was formerly a vice-principal of a large urban co-educational primary school. She is married and lives on a farm with her husband and three grown-up children. She already has a masters degree in education (with distinction) but decided to undertake modules from the Personal and Civic Education master's option out of professional interest.

> 'From an early stage I would say I wanted to be a teacher. From I was ten or eleven years old. Before that I wanted to be a detective, but after that, nothing would have deviated me from it and I wanted to be a primary school teacher.'

> 'My father, a bank manager, thought that teaching was a good and appropriate job for a girl!'

Kathy's narrative of teacher identity spans a significant career that needs to be culturally and historically located in terms of the predominant gender expectations operating at the outset of her career as well as any particular or idiosyncratic, personal and familial values that were also influential at the time. At the point where Kathy engages in her creative narrative with me, I was very aware of a woman who has a clear, now more independent view of what it is and is not that she wants from being an educational professional at this stage in her career. Her conscious move away from conformity to external expectations to an internal valuing process which identifies the need for more personal satisfaction and affirmation is evident in her words below. Half way through the research process, she confronted a decision about whether or not to apply for a principalship:

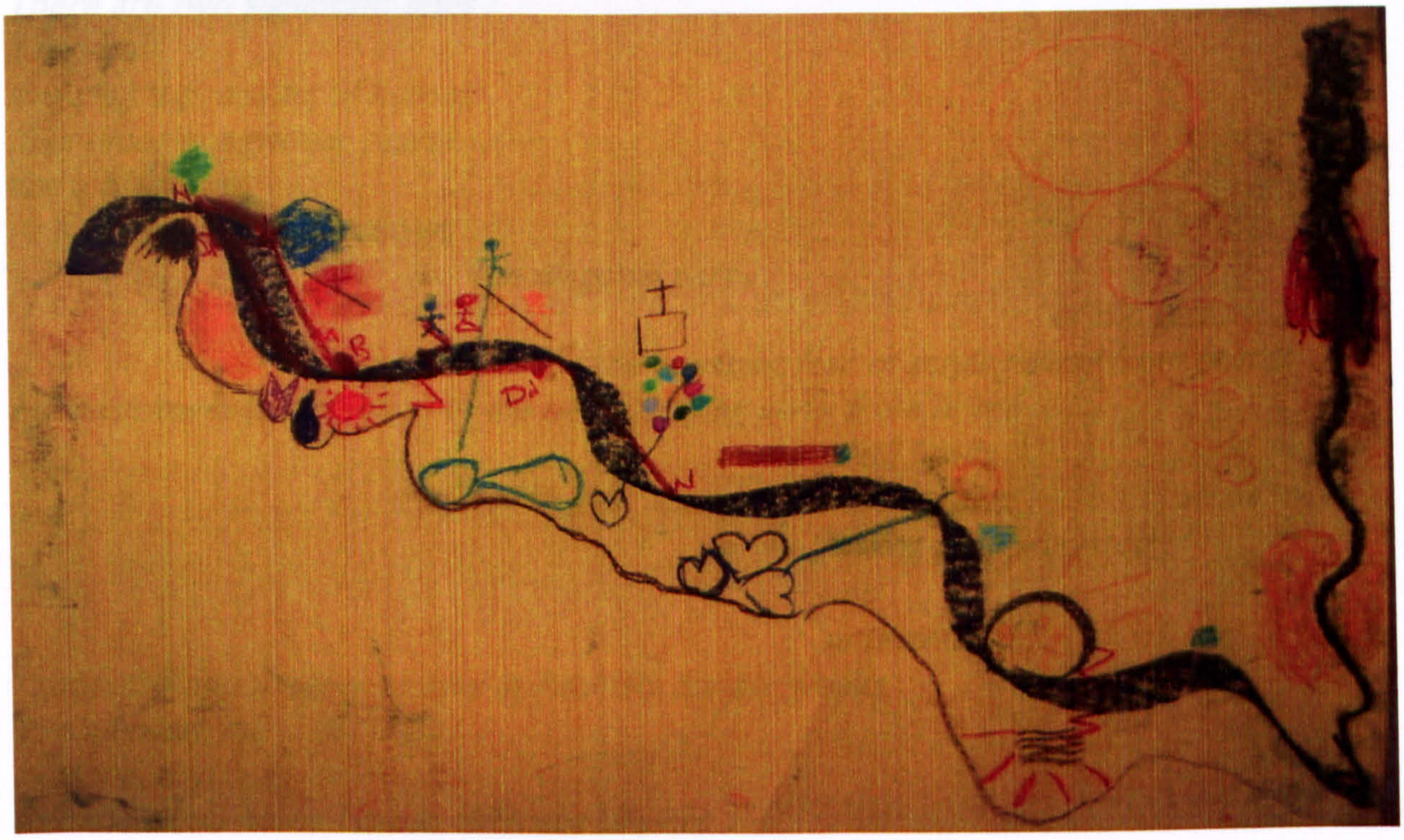
> 'I pulled out of the PQH programme. I felt it was full of tick-boxes and conforming and just how many hoops can you jump through and I thought I don't have to do this any more, I don't have to prove it to anybody. And…I might want to be a principal…but not after this. When I drew that three-dimensional box, I realized I did not want to be confined anymore… I suppose when you have only seven years left to work, those years have got to be enjoyable and they have got to be what you really, really want…'

> 'I cannot believe that I have the kind of job I have (advisory officer)…I am the kind of person who wakes up on a Monday and cannot wait to get back to work…working for a boss I admire…when he gives me

feedback, I still wonder what it is that I have done wrong…I just cannot believe that I have been given this opportunity.'

6.3.i Kathy: Autobiographical time line

'Constructing the time-line for me was …evocative; it was a heavy and painfully thought-provoking process in which I was facing issues I had not taken time to confront before. It's not that I didn't know they were there; it's just that I tend to make sure life is so full I don't have time to confront difficult issues. I deal with the practicalities (the professional face, the outer mask) but not enough with the personal implications (behind the mask, the inner path).'



Description of Kathy's autobiographical timeline

Kathy's autobiographical time-line is primarily described by a black chalk sine-wave running diagonally across the ochre paper from upper-left to bottom-right in landscape format. Where it meets the corner of the page, it takes a sharp turn vertically up the right-hand side of the A3 sheet, becoming thicker and stronger in the last section but more abstractly depicted. Symbols above the main line represent significant events and people in Kathy's life (stick-figures, colours, crosses and lines). Below the line are colours and shapes symbolizing emotional experiences (shadings, colours, hearts, lines), contained within a brown line. There is little detailed symbolization (more abstract) on the vertical dimension.

Written reflections

I started by drawing
the 'river'
diagonally across the paper

it represents about four-fifths
(forty years)
of the journey

before it turns
to complete
the journey
so far....
There are two significant lines :
a red one
showing the moving of homes
(five times in eighteen years)...
and a black one

which follows

the diagonal part

of the picture

the constant fear of staying away from home.

Homesickness has resulted in me never staying away from home

Until finally
At forty-five
feeling unappreciated
and
undervalued

I took the opportunity to stay in America for six weeks.
We all survived.
No-one died.
When I came home I made different choices.

Glimpses of memory
recapture the original fear
of separation from home
One is hugging my younger brother
One Christmas Eve

As we sank into the soft downy pillows under the warn flannelette sheets at my aunt's house.

We had been sent there
without warning

as my twin sister E had Scarlet fever and had to be quarantined.

All I wanted to do was go home
But I couldn't cry
Because if I did, then he would too

And all I knew was that I was a 'big girl' who had to look after B
and not cause a fuss.
Some years ago when I was trying to determine the cause of my homesickness, my mother related that:
My sister and I had been sent to the same aunt when B was born.

We were almost two years old and stayed there for about three weeks…
The inner dread of something happening to my family and the various moves
Are not happy memories.

The red circle
and the radiating lines
depict an unheard, angry scream to be listened to.

Research conversation 1:

Ruth: I was just wondering whether or not some things turned up that were unexpected.

Kathy: I don't think I ever thought of the moves from place to place in my early life having such a dramatic (and maybe traumatic) effect. It had always been part of my background that I knew was there …but it wasn't until I actually drew it out that I realized what an effect it had had …'

Ruth: So the moves were the main thing in a sense that came out, that you wouldn't have predicted in the time-line?

Kathy: It was all about the moves (and the loss of friends) and the rest of it was more to do with where I had started to come to terms with who I was and what I was going to do (before I turned the corner by going to America).

Ruth: There had been a lot of fear of leaving home.

Kathy: Very much so.

Ruth: I notice that the brown line (parallel to the black) peters out as it gets to the turn…not as defined.

Kathy: It does. I suppose, yes, I never went outside that line or took the risk outside it. I mean it doesn't even exist on this second bit at all! (Referring to vertical black line).

Ruth: Was there any critical incident that made you turn the corner at that point? Yes, America was what turned it but there must have been something happening for you to decide, yes, this is what I am going to do…..

Kathy: Part of it was to do with suddenly realizing I was not going to live an extremely sheltered life and be completely looked after by my husband and that he was not going to replicate my father…by ensuring me safe from harm and all financial problems (but also controlling)…so I had to take charge of my own life, that is basically where it was at….I had to make a decision. I could stay in the marriage or I could leave it ….so I stayed and went to America….

Research conversation 2:

Kathy: I started that time-line not knowing what it was going to look like so it was the angle the chalk was at that did that but it actually coincided with those various moves as well…so I hadn't really worked that out.

Ruth: You would say that it looked like an accident of the chalk but actually you are saying that symbolically it was accurate.

Kathy: I think it is…I don't know whether or not there is a connection but it wasn't intentional at the time; but I had thought that my entire early life would fit on to that first bit (of the paper) but it was only then that I actually realized just how vast that (early) section actually was. And yet how small it is in the actual years!

Ruth: You had predicted everything would have fitted into the one bit but it suddenly was very densely populated…

Kathy: Yes, and I suppose I was taking the time to look at it. I didn't think for a minute that these issues would come out but…as I was going through those (drawing) details, the feelings were all coming back which is why I really only got down to the corner. Because I don't think (on the upward line) there is anything as emotive as this bit.

Ruth: Did this? How did this affect your life as a teacher?

Kathy: Part of me would have been to be the conventional teacher and my gut-feeling was there is more to this. I can be a better teacher but I must conform. The 'turn' was significant which included me standing up to my dad. I didn't feel I had to conform. I felt I could…

Ruth: Throw off the shackles..

Kathy: Yes… be more open-minded…before that I felt I had quite a closed mind – that there was only one way to do things and that was as you were told to do….and I felt I could be more open with children. It is alright to give them a voice and also I could do it better if I had a good relationship with them.

6.3.ii Kathy: Masks and personae

Kathy: outer mask

Kathy: journal reflection

The outside of the face of my professional mask is very conformist and perfectionist in the balanced representation of facial features. It has no nose, perhaps this is because my sense of smell is not very good. The eyebrows are quite pronounced (threatening?): The mask appears quite attractive in a traditional sort of way but there is nothing creative or original about it. The smile and warm tone to the cheeks help to make it approachable, but if the smile wasn't there, the eyebrows would make it even more threatening. It is interesting that they are there at all as my normal appearance would not indicate any eyebrows. Do I feel imperfect without them?

The mask, with its conventional exterior, helps to protect weaknesses and vulnerability because it portrays an allure of competence. Much of this has been there since childhood and further developed by the education system which encourages and rewards conformity. Conformity was also rewarded and strongly encouraged in my childhood family life.

The wisp of 'cloud' and the yellow tissue on the 'outside face', however show that I am not afraid to challenge conventional approaches and ideas and yet these do not deter from the balanced and stable appearance of the rest of the face. It is these added pieces that indicate perhaps I am not a complete perfectionist, but for the moment, they look more like 'add-ons' than an integral part.

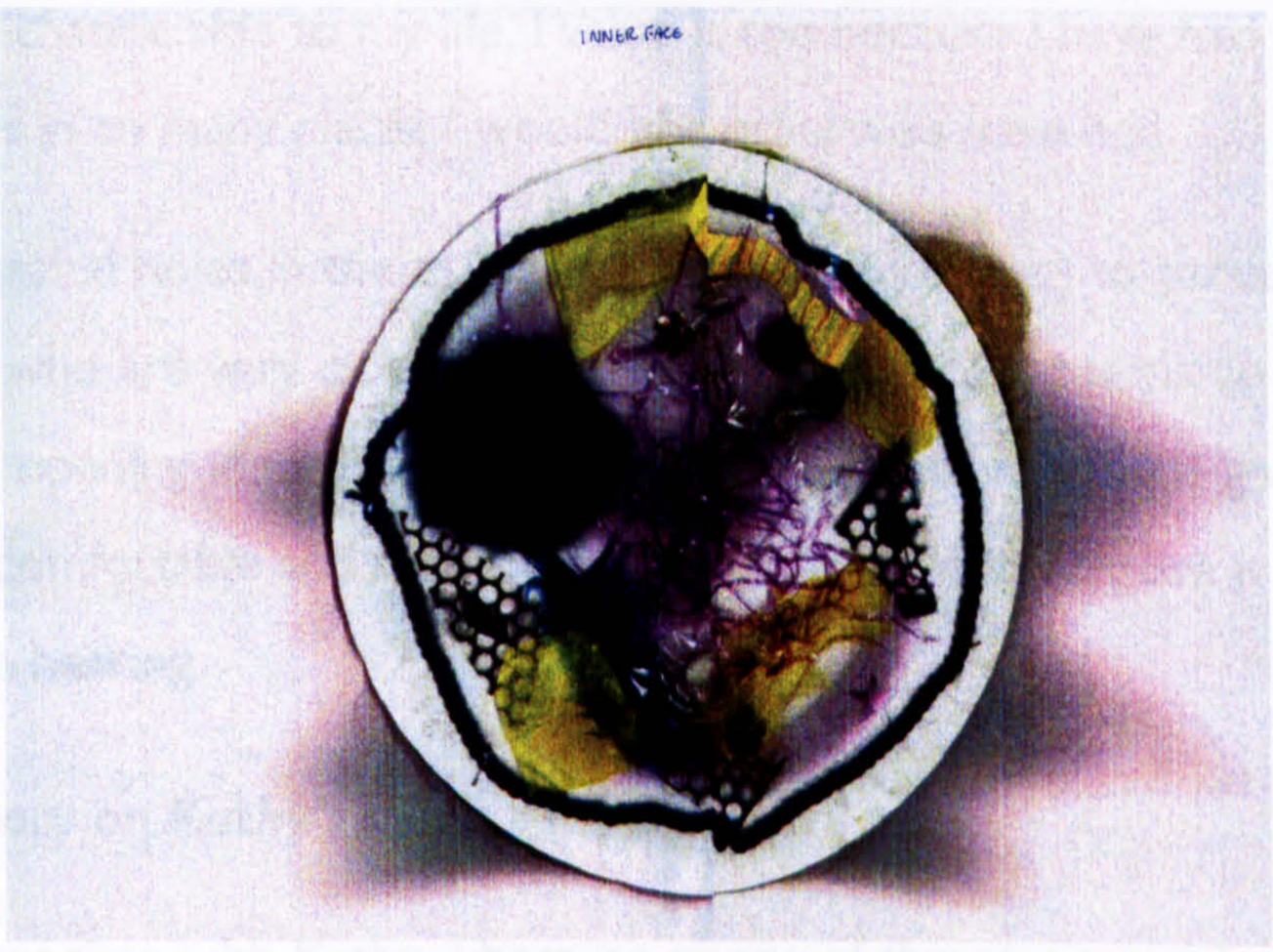
I feel that while it looks ostensibly like a conventional face, it is also childlike in its construction but it represents normality, stability, balance and I am happy with that.

Research conversation 3

Kathy: I think there was a stage when I felt I had to look conformist. I would try to appear you know in the manner which was to be expected but it didn't have to be rigid.

Ruth: So this is more of a stereotype, the kind of image you would have carried as a teacher; it's smiling, well turned-out.

Kathy: It's probably how I envisage it - there needs to be a difference in how you present yourself so people know who you are. It is a very initial thing though. I think I am moving more towards the fact that I don't have to look like a stereotypical officer which has been 'a suit'. It has actually been said about me that I am not a suit person which is how I would rather have it. There is a certain dress code that I feel more comfortable in.



Kathy: inner Mask

Kathy: journal reflections

The inside of my mask is represented in a myriad of differing textures and shapes originally intended to show a more interesting, softer and more vulnerable self.

Others found it chaotic. It is this chaos that links both the self-system picture, with its blue lines radiating frenetically from the 'me' in the picture and the chaotic start to the timeline. The blue lines are at the centre of the self-system picture and the shredded plastic is at the centre of the inner mask, making the wearing of it extremely irritating and uncomfortable.

The strong blue line round the inside of my inner mask is held firmly in place. I think this is important. While I recognize that the inside of the mask can be perceived as chaotic and I, myself, can see that at times my life is frenetic, and the chaos can create panic, it is always manageable (inside the line) and I will follow it with a period of calm and organization. Sometimes I can be so busy creating order for others in work, family or social life that I create chaos for myself and I try not to let that show.

I like and feel comfortable in an organized environment – both public and private – but there is also a part of me that rebels against organization and structure. So while I do have a chaotic side to my life, I value it too because I have had so many experiences in so many places I would not otherwise have had.

Some concealed holes in the mask enable me (the wearer) to partially see others but only those who are very close can catch a glimpse of what is inside and because there is no opening for a mouth, speech is difficult but hearing is good. Wearing the mask is uncomfortable and restrictive and it is a relief to remove it as it impedes all senses save hearing.

Commentary on Kathy's mask

Having spent time with Kathy, I became aware of the resonance between Kathy's masks and my experience of her. She displays her professional identity very lucidly and seemingly unselfconsciously and yet there is a great disparity between the inside and the outside presentations as evidenced in the creative pieces and the transcripts of our research conversations. Wearing the mask was irritating, itchy and intolerable because of the variety of craft fabrics on the inner mask and this led to revelations about how allergic Kathy is to a wide variety of foodstuffs, fabrics and metals. She is extremely careful in her diet and dress. Through this we began to explore her assumptions about the potential (psychosomatic) relationship between her allergies

and her unspoken anger and irritation concerning issues of personal and professional significance over the years.

6.3.iii Kathy: Self-system picture

Research conversation 4

On discussing the importance of the symbol of the rainbow, and being under the rainbow, symbolizing 'hope':

Kathy: What popped up was how important it is that you can feel safe in your working environment wherever it is that you are...to feel safe for you to do your best work.

Ruth: And by safe you mean?

Kathy: To be accepted for the person you are and to have diversity accepted. That you aren't having to conform to perceived or pre-conceived ideals. That it is alright to be different so long as whatever you are being asked to do is being done. But it's alright to have different ideas about things.

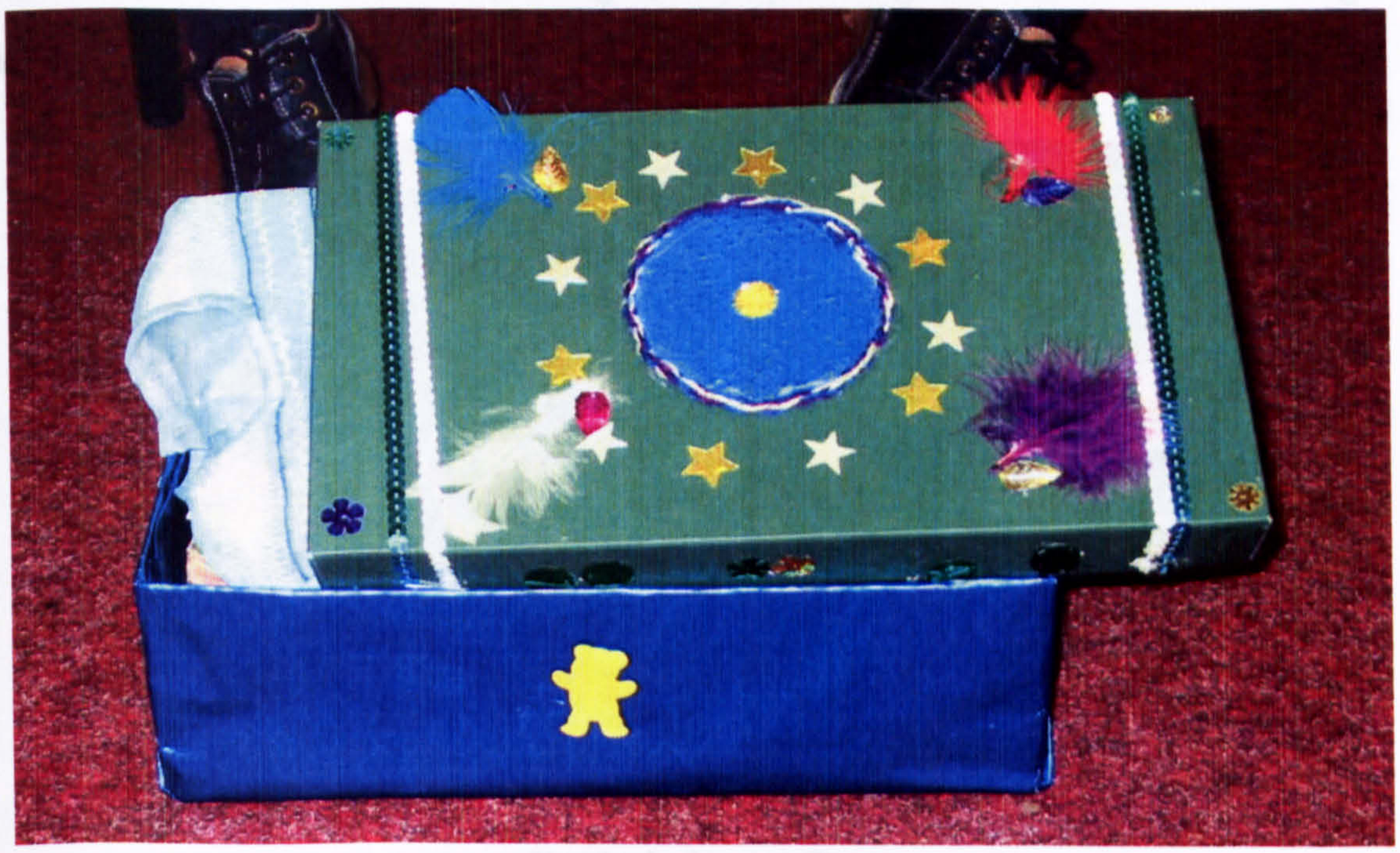
Those fifteen lines that radiate frenetically from the centre, me; they are really my work programmes. These are things that I am involved in and are connected to the discomfort on the inside of the mask. But I sorted that out afterwards by going to the filofax and blocking out days for preparation and planning.

Ruth: And that was an unexpected thing, seeing how much you were involved in.

Kathy: It was very real and very visual. I could see immediately why and the feeling that I wasn't getting enough done because there was too much to do.

There was a real sense of Kathy being dissipated both personally and professionally by her extensive range of commitments both at home and at work. She was the 'centre' of activity and held a huge sense of responsibility, wanting to make her unique 'mark' while at the same time trying to break her earlier pattern of conformity to dominant expectations. Prior to the self-system picture, Kathy had been operating on top of this pressure which had been below her level of awareness.

6.3.iv Kathy: Self-box



Research conversation 5:

Kathy: I made the box but a lot of the things (inside) came out of another box.

Ruth: And you knew what you wanted in the box?

Kathy: Oh very much so

Ruth: And yet apart from your own schooling, there is virtually nothing about who you are as a teacher in the box and I don't know whether that is in any way significant?

Kathy: I suppose because I have always kept…this is very much a family thing with me as the teaching would be different. I do have the 'egg' that I use in 'circle time' in there. That would be central to my work; everything comes back to a way of doing circle time in some way. I don't think you can do circle time and not have it as part of your teaching and learning in the classroom.

Ruth: So it is actually core to your actual practice as a teacher?

Kathy: So yes, it is actually core.

Commentary on self-box

Kathy's self-box was an amazing Aladdin's-cave experience. While, the top of the box was orderly and mandala-like leading us to explore Kathy's considered relationship between spirituality and church-based religion, the inside was completely different. It was choc-full of layers of significant and tangible symbols of Kathy's life story, like her autobiographical time-line in embodied form. The intricacies of the box unpacked from their orderly arrangement to take up considerable physical space and narrative time, and where photographs played a significant role in re-creating past events and feelings.

Kathy's Inner Box

6.3.v Kathy: Unearthing unconscious

Kathy's research conversations on her images covered a huge amount of biographical ground. Her narrative of identity is structured around a significant number of early formative or nuclear episodes, which hold strongly associated emotional material, the power of which Kathy had not been in touch with. Kathy uncovered a variety of issues relevant to her perception of herself now, during the research process. The way in which Kathy relates to unconscious is to see previously unacknowledged aspects of her life as presenting themselves through unexpected 'turns of events' in her images. Through focusing on these, Kathy acknowledges to herself that some significant behaviours and beliefs, central to her sense of professional identity, may exist in reaction to or, indeed be driven by, these unexplored emotional episodes. I

have selected what I consider to be a few of the main ways in which unconscious is storied in Kathy's creative narrative.

Through the use of the autobiographical timeline, Kathy found access to old memories (nuclear episodes) and the connection between these memories that provide unanticipated explanations and breakthroughs in personal understanding of her current behaviour, hopes and fears. In particular, very early memories of separation and dislocation (constantly moving home as well as 'being evacuated to an aunt's home') led to an emotional explanation of the irrational fear of leaving home (homesickness) that had dogged Kathy almost into late adulthood. Fear and dread are identified as being at the heart of this. Through the use of the art-making process, some of these unexpected emotional episodes appear in the picture and the relationship between external happenings and internal self-experience is made more lucid, not only in terms of personal but also in terms of professional life. Kathy describes this as not just a rational understanding but more a reliving, and therefore, re-evaluation of the previous memories. The insecurity deriving from the moves, as she sees it, is counteracted by the security of the processes of schooling and teaching as a 'secure job'.

With regard to her identity as a teacher, Kathy would describe herself as having a driving philosophy in teaching that has at its core such principles as 'inclusion', 'democracy in the classroom' and the importance of encouraging and listening to the child's voice. Her capacity to *'speak out'* is a part of her professional identity that she says *'has often got me labelled by men, like my last school principal'*. Discussions which were stimulated by images deriving from the symbols on the time-line and a variety of self-box memorabilia, including early biographic photographs, led to Kathy becoming aware of (perhaps for the first time) connections between early experiences and the passion that fuels her causes and sense of moral purpose as a teacher. One centres on not being listened to in the family as a child, and things being done 'in her interest' which were never explained (e.g. being sent away). Another depicts an incident at school. Also part of the angry red sun symbol relates to having witnessed silently the regular physical abuse of her brother. Kathy found it very difficult to talk of these previously untold episodes, and her feelings of guilt, finding it hard to accept even now that it was not her fault nor was there anything

she could reasonably have done at the time. Although emotionally painful to acknowledge, Kathy also links this realization to her commitment to speak out constantly against mistreatment and to challenge, on behalf of children, anything she feels is wrong or unjust and to insist that *'children should be given opportunities to speak directly on behalf of themselves.'*

Research conversation 6

Ruth: What's the connection if any to how you are as a teacher?

Kathy: Back there you did have a voice but it wasn't listened to...she didn't do anything about it...if I can DO something about it, I will...always let children have their emotional voices heard. What was of significance to me was where he had no voice...that other one about moving and having to leave a friend...hopefully in my teaching that won't happen - an awful lot of things happen in children's' lives and people do not listen to them because they're only a child. The best thing that a child can say about me is that I am fair!

Ruth: Do you think that you would have talked about these things if I had simply interviewed you about your professional identity as a teacher?

Kathy: Talking versus drawing....it would have been more general rather than specific. I wouldn't have taken the time to do it before.... Definitely, you know how much I hate art (and I hate music too). So the art business I have a thing about, but it wasn't threatening. It wasn't going to be looked at for its artistic quality. It was what would be of significance to me. If I hadn't taken the time out to be looking at it (symbol on time-line) and if I hadn't drawn it and looked at it afterwards.....then I wouldn't have known...

Finally then, Kathy attributed significant meaning to the creative research process and in so doing articulated her narrative of identity around the axes of family and work. Her explicit narrative emphasizes her common-sense, practical busy and pragmatic approach to life but engaging in the creative narrative process uncovered strong emotional seams of fear and anger, which appear to have been interwoven into her identity although hitherto unappreciated. Unconscious attributions are more implicit than explicit in how Kathy structures her identity although these tend to centre on (i) avoidance of emotional memories or nuclear episodes, (ii) drive for social justice, (iii) meaningful coincidences and (iv) a relationship between physical symptoms and unexpressed emotions.

6.4. Daisy: Creative narrative (III)

Daisy (early 30s) is a secondary school teacher and head of department in a successful, co-educational grammar school in a rural catchment area. Daisy is out on secondment for two years to a curriculum project where her role is to develop resource materials for her main subject area, which is the teaching of religious education (RE). She is married and at the end of the taught module on *Personal Education,* Daisy had her first baby. She is studying for a masters degree in educational studies and engaged in the research process after her maternity leave was completed.

> 'I was coming from a secondary school and RE was my best subject and I was very involved in the Church at the time and I wanted to be an RE teacher because that is what I can do.'

> 'I can still remember sitting in my brother's bedroom window, about seven or eight – we were a very working class family, we lived in a housing estate – looking out of his window and looking at all the houses around and thinking, 'I want to get out of this'. I knew it would take years as I was young but I really thought I would get out and I knew that education was my way out and it has been but I just felt then I had years to go.'

Despite all the outer trappings of professional success, I think that Daisy would probably describe her professional narrative of identity as one that could be characterized as 'success against the odds'. What emerged from the research conversations was a story where achievement in education was seen as an escape route from a difficult home background and where teaching was an aspiration, based on what Daisy was good at and strongly believed in at that time. She has had a strong upward professional trajectory, culminating in her current role, which would be considered by many teachers to be a high-status position. I had a very strong personal connection to some themes in Daisy's emergent narrative and was aware of her sharing sensitive, previously unspoken aspects of her story that perhaps were not so much unconscious as not public, prior to this. Despite her success, and given the depth and difficulty of her own personal experience as a pupil, Daisy was also bringing to awareness personally relevant, deeper questions about her perceived emotional limitations as a teacher. In the background, during the research period, she was also debating her options regarding her return to the classroom in September.

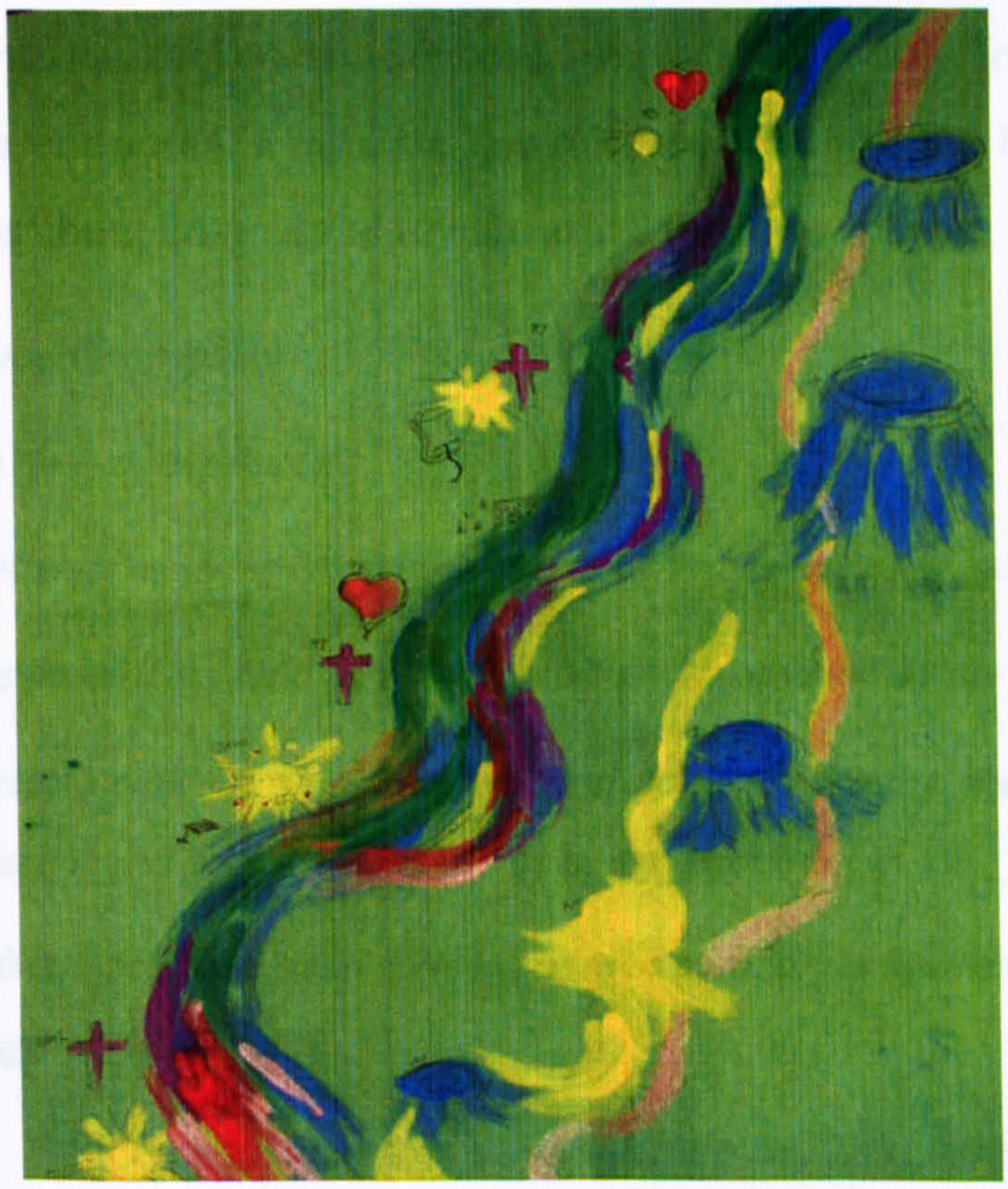
'As a teacher, I am a very good teacher. My classroom is a very secure place to be and I know that I probably have children in my classroom that are going through hell at home. It is a very disciplined classroom and sometimes there is a lot of humour but they know my boundaries and my rules and they really enjoy it. I know a lot of them have chosen RE at GCSE because of me which is very flattering as a teacher… I want them to feel safe, I want it to be a safe haven but I don't want to know their problems. I don't want to get involved in their pain.'

'Then I question whether I am in the right job. I have the guilty side that thinks 'you have gone through all that and you are not going to help other people!'

6.4.i Daisy: Autobiographical time-line

Description of Daisy's autobiographical time-line

Daisy's time-line is presented in portrait format. It is a multicoloured 'river' made up from a series of wispy lines painted diagonally from upper right to bottom left hand side. Symbols of hearts, crosses and suns are depicted to the left-hand side of the main line, representing significant events and blue forms, pools of tears appear opposite the three purple crosses. An alternative and parallel line of pink follows the main flow and a yellow, more chaotic, line joins with it, halfway down the right-hand side of the main river-line.



Daisy's Autobiographical Time-Line

Written reflections:

I realize that I focussed in on the losses

and achievements in my life

I suppose these are the things

That have impinged most

I found it difficult to record my feelings towards the events in my life

When I try to understand why I can't put these events and feelings into words,

I suppose the closest I can get to explaining

is to say that

I did not want to feel exposed.

'If I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and that is all I have' (John Powell).

Because of the sheer extent of pain different events in my life have caused me,

Maybe it's become easy to talk about those things because I only talk about them

At a certain level.

Daisy: journal reflections 1:

Something else that struck me afterwards was not so much the events that I had recorded as those I had omitted. I know I didn't start from when I was born. The first event noted in my time-line occurred in 1983 and having been born in 1968 means about 14 years of my life are simply not there.

Shrouded in mystery

Again 'fear of exposure'

Something I'm struggling with and work hard at covering up.

My achievements tend to be academic and motivated by my career.

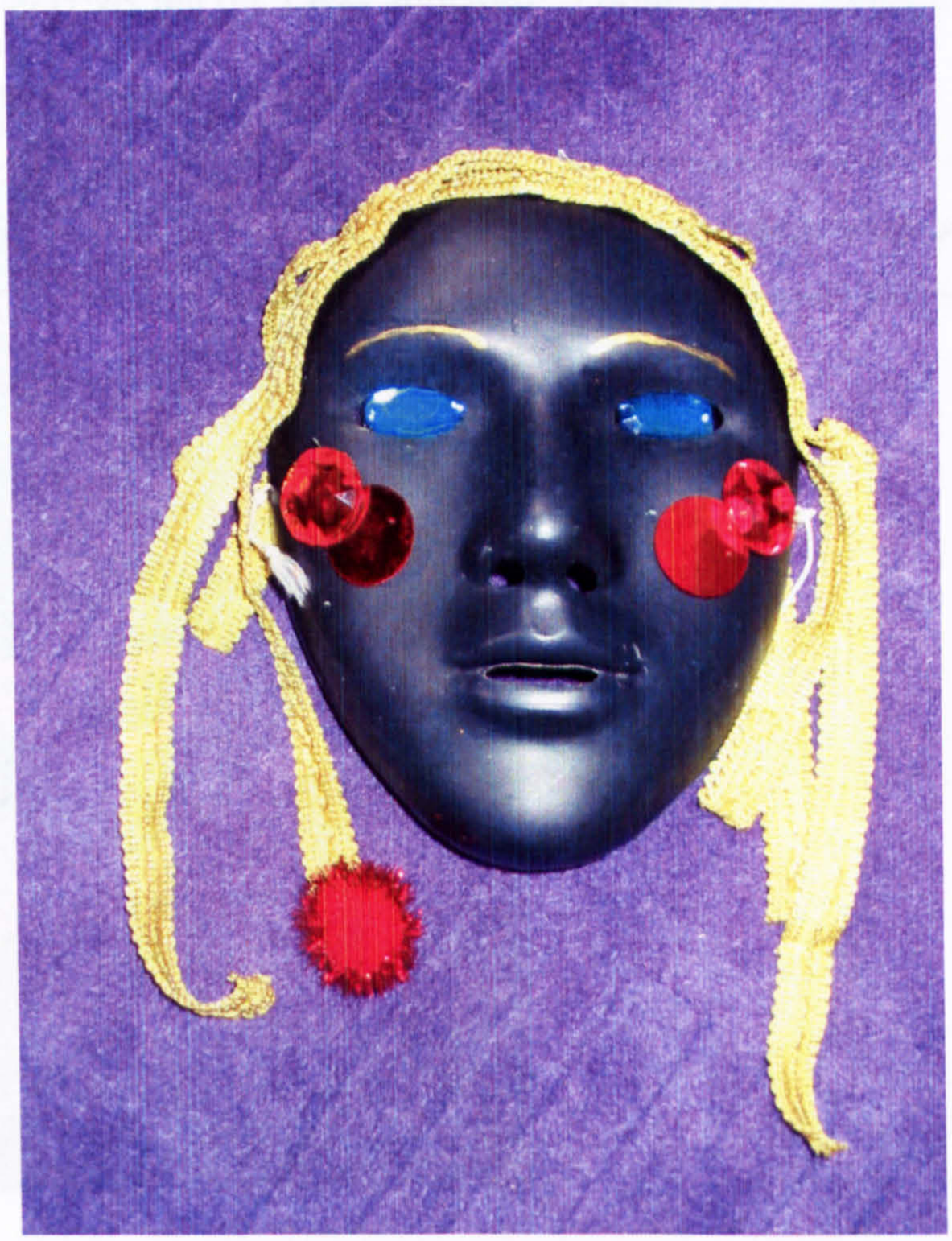
I painted a pink line along the left-hand side to represent these. It is a solid line that has been consistent and positive. This has been my safety-net in life.

The fact that I have been able to succeed sometimes against the odds, has given me the inner strength to keep going.

> 'I do recognize that striving to do my best, and have others think well of me is an important part of who I am.'

6.4.ii Daisy: Masks and personae

Daisy mask without smile



Daisy: Journal reflection 2:

For this task, I was keen to get my hands on one of the ready-made plastic masks of a perfectly shaped face which I planned to adapt to reflect my own face. There were only a couple of these so I was out of my chair like a whippet to ensure I got my hands on one. This surprised me as I am a creative person and the practical making of a mask from materials would have presented me with no problem. So why did I need to use one of the pre-formed masks? I suppose I liked the fact that the face was perfectly formed. Is this because I want to present a perfect image? I'm not sure. I don't think so but I do know that it is important to me to be liked.

I proceeded to decorate the mask in an attempt to present a 'pretty' face. I used gold braided material for the hair, blue jewels for the eyes and shiny red circles and jewels for the cheeks. For the mouth I used red pipe cleaner, which I manipulated

into the shape of a big smile and placed it on top of the unsmiling mouth of the mask. It was very important to me that the face should be decorated just the way I had planned. When my eyebrows fell off, I was annoyed! I ended up drawing them on.

Daisy mask: with original smile

Daisy: Journal reflection 3:

I realized afterwards just how important the wearing of make-up is to me in my professional life (as I looked around the group tonight, I was struck by the number of women who wore no make-up at all!). I began to wear make-up as a young teenager. They say it covers a multitude of sins: for me it covered a multitude of tears and helped me to feel I blended in. Tears were a big part of my life as a child and teenager. So the wearing of make-up for protection, rather than for beauty, is something I have brought with me into adulthood even though I don't cry now to the extent that I did then.

Wearing the mask, there was something vulnerable about it. Having used two blue jewels for eyes, I understand that I was trying to hide my own eyes in the wearing of the mask. This reminded me of a poem I wrote in my late teens.

'Never saw eyes as sad as yours
Your twisted pain reflecting depths of sorrow
Deep dark wells, the surface never ripples
Your cold hard stare meets my eyes
I'm staring at your lies
As I look in the mirror.'

Research conversation 1:

Daisy: The mask is just a spectacular mask for me. It's funny but self-image is very important – I don't know why it is. I am scared of being faceless without my make-up. Without it, even in front of my baby, I fear scaring him. I just feel young and pale and unattractive – the make-up makes me feel more attractive . Without it it's like a blank face. Something to do with not being quite good enough, even though I get loads of affirmation. I think I liked that mask because it was perfectly formed and even trying to put the jewels on each cheek, everything was matching on each side. I didn't like the fact there weren't eyes in it.

Research conversation 2:

Ruth: How do you feel about your mask now ?

Daisy: People in the group thought that the mask was really ugly and I thought, 'No, it's beautiful!' I suppose that's what I want to be seen as. I know I am not really like that but I would like to be, you know.

Ruth: It's more how you would want to be seen than how you feel you are.

Daisy: I hate seeing myself on video. It's because I am so small. I'm not this small inside you know. I don't like being this small physically and I felt it especially when I was in school....I didn't feel like a woman you know, they were all wearing bras. I just about wear a bra now...breastfeeding was amazing. I really felt like a woman probably for the first time in my life...because breasts are actually so important.

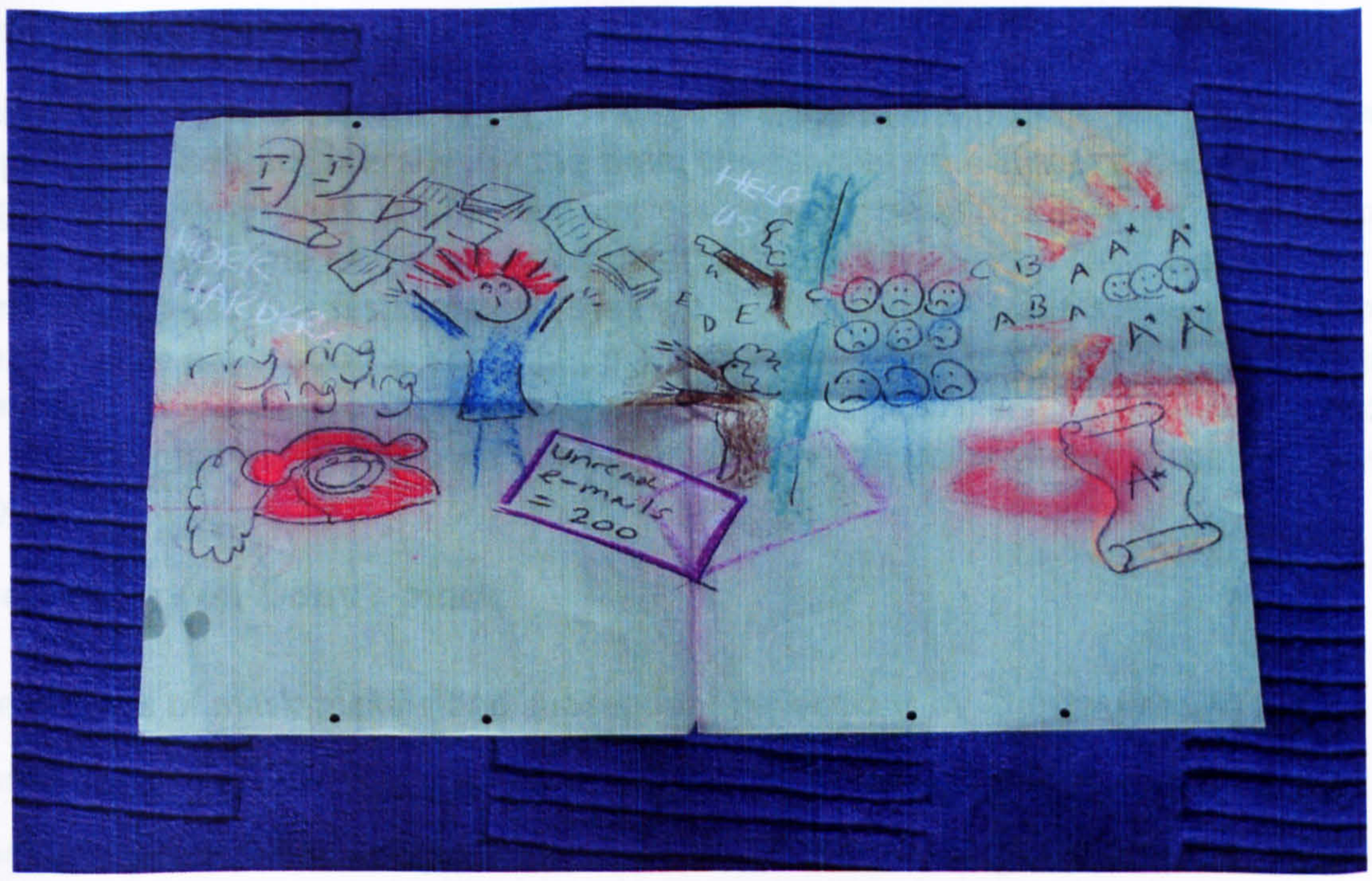
Ruth: Is this the face you present to you professional world?

Daisy: No, that is not the face I know. I am not like that in my professional world. In work, it's not that people see me as the clown but they just see me as a personality.....but my make-up and the face I present is still important...

Ruth: And you say, you don't cry these days but when I look at those jewelled eyes, they could be brimful of tears from back there that aren't cried.

Daisy: It is interesting what you say about the mask because that is true - eyes filled with tears. I am so used to seeing them that I don't actually see them as tears anymore.

6.4.iii Daisy: Self-system picture



Daisy: Journal reflection 4

'I feel I produced quite a chaotic picture which reflects my feelings as I created it. In my job, I find myself faced with a lot of responsibility, much of which lies outside my job description. The main feeling is one of frustration as I cannot get to the creative work for which I was employed in the first place. Even though I am six months pregnant, this is not apparent at all in the picture. It's as if my pregnancy does not exist during the working day. I appear to be trapped in the picture. I'm hemmed in on every side by superiors, paperwork, teachers, e-mails and a telephone. The pupils for whom I am trying to produce support material are on the other side of the wall.'

'I realize that the more I do for others that lies outside my job description, the more people demand of me. My desire to be competent and have others always think well of me has the adverse effect – of exhausting me as I attempt to do more work than I am physically capable of. Right bang in the middle of my picture are teachers for whom I have become a knight in shining armour as I attempt to solve every little query that comes my way. All this makes me question whether or not I am in the right job. The self-system picture has been an aid in helping me to come to terms with what life is really like for me in my current profession.'

Research conversation 3

Ruth: What's key in the picture for you?

Daisy: The phone is incredibly big; it's the demands of the phone. The phone never stops ringing. Red hot literally. By the time, the teachers have got to the point of ringing (exam time) they can be very aggressive, very rude. I have never spoken to anyone the way some of them have spoken to me. Very angry. I have actually met some of them on courses since and they were like pussycats face to face. The phone, I think is such a weapon for some people, you know. I am really looking forward to going back to the classroom and not having a phone. There are no boundaries in this job at all. People think they own you and that they can use you and abuse you in any way.

Commentary on Daisy's mask

The process of mask-making and subsequent reflections by Daisy, through her journal and in dialogue, suggests that the mask epitomizes some deeply-held emotional patterns for Daisy, some of which she is becoming more aware of than others. Her face is central to her sense of selfhood and also to her embodied sense of who she is as a female in this culture. In psychoanalytic terms, the mask could easily be described as compensating for many perceived deficits (mostly in relation to earlier milestones) in Daisy's life. On the other hand, Daisy's mask-work throws up real issues concerning the individually experienced cultural oppression when women fail to meet the social norms and expectations that create so much emotional baggage. The two main themes that emerge from the brief exploration are: (i) Daisy's fear of being colourless and her consequent need to hide behind make-up in her desire for an image of perfection and (ii) the more extended relationship between her face and her embodied sense of her (perceived inadequate) sexuality.

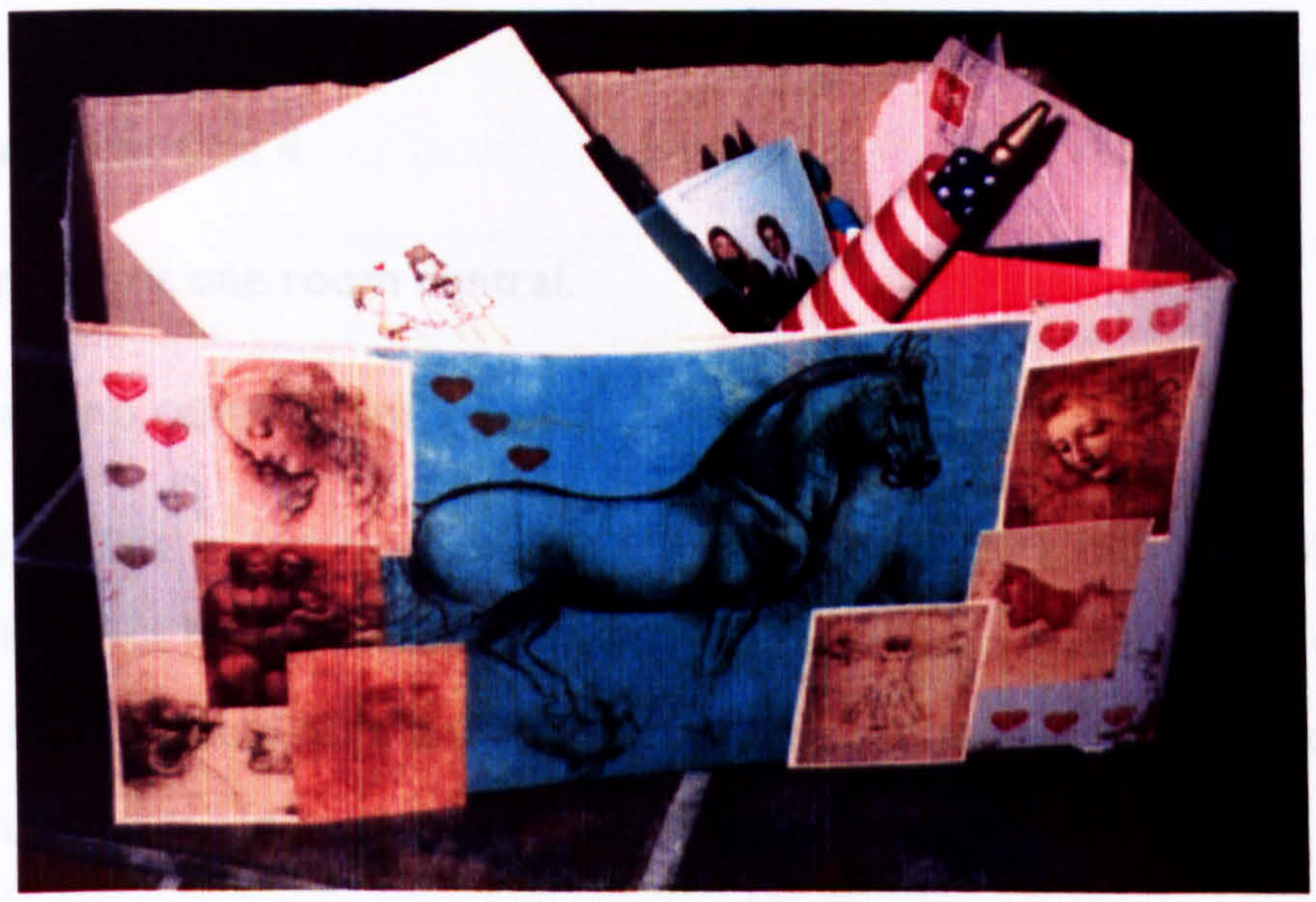
Very little of these 'inner' themes, as represented through the mask, it seems, permeate beyond the mask in her professional context. These unarticulated sensitive dimensions of self do not appear to be in any way vulnerable in the professional arena; here Daisy is popular but also has access to another persona or mask, more humorous and unique - a personality. Taken alone, Daisy's mask gives some insight into the deeper and thicker description of self but it is only in Daisy's wider autobiographical story (with emotional patterns associated with themes of parental loss, alcoholism, adultism, poverty and neglect) that the 'felt sense' of Daisy's mask becomes more apparent and meaningful.

6.4.iv Daisy's Self-box

Daisy: Journal reflection 5

'One of the most revealing processes has been the making of a self-box as it has helped me deal with some unresolved issues. One of the things that struck me was the way I created the inside of the box. It is a bit like a doll's house with different rooms. Personal artefacts were allocated a particular space and there tends to be no overlap from one room to the next. One room still remains empty, as I'm still looking for something.'

Daisy Self-box: outer



'I suppose a coping mechanism I have adopted over time is to separate different events and my reaction to them. For example, my childhood is very much something which I keep closed from other people.'

'I was unaware I compartmentalized my life like this until I made the box but I feel my acknowledgement of it is a first step towards emotional growth and understanding others.'

Daisy Inner box

Research conversation 4

Daisy: There is not one room central.

Ruth: There is no centre-point.

Daisy: There is like an intersection. No, I think I have a core self. I do think I have a solid line otherwise I think I would have fallen apart. There is definitely a core self or else I don't think I would have coped. I feel exactly the same person as I did when I was five or ten years old.

> 'I grew up with trauma and trauma is what I knew and that is how I can survive.'

Daisy offered these additional reflections on her self-box after she had received my first draft of her creative narrative:

'In the bird's eye view of the box, the compartment with the flag is like the entrance hall to a house. To the right is a compartment containing 'past romantic relationships.' Behind this is the 'pain' of my family life. The compartment at the middle back contains those things that have been my strength and have held me together. The large room to the left of the box is L-shaped. It's empty, although I would put the heart …in it if no-one knew it was there.'

6.4.v Daisy: Unearthing unconscious

Daisy's creative narrative elaborated layers of unconscious mostly being presented through issues to do with secrecy, concealment and the ways in which she dealt with emotional issues of shame and grief by means of what she termed 'inner compartmentalization'. Externally, her cover-up was by means of her presentation of self-image as attractive, competent, responsive professional. The impact of many early fearful and shaming episodes arising from a neglectful, uncertain and often bizarre childhood, coupled with a diminutive sense of self had been 'normalized' and buried until stimulated to awareness through the creative images and the accompanying research conversations. Daisy had always carried an internal, unelaborated narrative of shame which she took the risk of exploring through the research relationship. Alongside this, there were a number of identity contradictions exposed. One was in the oft-quoted symbiotic relationship between emotional vulnerability and survival determination, characterized by Daisy's career success and present-day, secure, middle-class lifestyle and the second was in the apparent chasm between her professional sense of responsibility to pupils' emotional lives and her perceived refusal to get close enough to hear any 'narratives of trauma'. The latter theme in her teacher identity became more conscious and self-evident through the research process.

6.5 Tricia: Creative narrative (IV)

Tricia (mid 30s) is a Business Studies teacher and head of department in a large all-boys secondary grammar school in a rural town in Northern Ireland. She is also a careers teacher which gives her a role within the middle management team of her school. She is currently studying for a masters degree with special reference to guidance and counselling. She is single, looking for a home of her own to buy and would describe herself as living in a period of personal transition.

> 'I suppose it was not really doing as well at A-level that led me to consider teaching. I had wanted to be a solicitor and I knew I wanted to help others but I suppose I chose teaching in the end for security.'

Tricia entered the research process really feeling that there was little personally for her to gain from it but she was happy to engage with me nevertheless. As a result of her interest in counselling and youth ministry earlier in her life, she had already undertaken a lot of personal development activities which had been arts-based. Reflecting on this later:

Ruth: I am aware that in a sense there may have been a lot of re-visiting things and that maybe there is a little frustration around the fact that there is nothing new for you in this.

Tricia: I was so wound up with the fact that I still was where I am, still stuck in this job, this place. It has just taken me a little time to be able to see the situation.

Tricia declared early on in the research process that teaching had not been so much a personal vocation, more a second and forced choice. In many ways she had set herself in opposition to this career choice so as not to conform to the wider family norms for females. However, academic disappointment took her from a hoped-for career in law and she now has a successful career in teaching. I had a contradictory experience of Tricia on meeting her. On the one hand I felt Tricia presented an assured, confident professional self but, on the other I had a sense of some disenchantment under the surface. Through engagement with the creative images, I believe Tricia uncovered a narrative disjuncture at this stage in her career. What is gradually revealed is an ongoing search for deep connection ('her calling') and that despite initially protesting that she experienced no felt separation between her inner and outer, personal and professional, the gap between her professional success and her personal desire for a relationship and a family of her own becomes increasingly apparent:

'But I am not sure where I want to go. To be honest, I am still trying to mull over what is the essence of why I am doing what I am doing or what I am looking to do. I realize that I have reached a point in my career now where I have done everything I have set out to do – even though I didn't ever say; "oh, I am going to do this" or "that sounds good!" I suppose things like becoming a careers teacher and Head of Department allowed me more control and power over what I do in school, over decisions in school -allowing individuals to do whatever it is their call to do, whether large or small, the whole aspect of personal development that school and education allows.'

6.5.i Tricia Autobiographical time-line

Description of Tricia's time-line:

Tricia's autobiographical time-line comprises a 'road of life' which starts in the top left-hand corner of the landscape page and meanders through two major turns to the bottom right-hand bottom corner where it ends in a 'T' junction. The road is heavily and colourfully annotated with detailed written comments and symbols (stick-figures, coffin-shapes, mountains, hearts, broken hearts, arrows, rolled parchments, buildings). What is also significant is that the road starts in yellow before becoming blue and where the yellow stretch signifies events and dynamics happening in the life of the family into which Tricia was born. Tricia wrote the reflections on her autobiographical timeline below three months before engaging in the research conversations

Written reflections

The creation of my journey

or my road of life

was one

which I was familiar describing,

my first reaction being

of having nothing to learn from the experience

very quickly I realized that

I had learnt a lot more

about how events

long before I was born

affected my life

and those around me.

At the end of the task

I realized that

I had not separated the outer world events

from my own personal experiences

since I felt

these worked together.

A lot of my journey seems to have been taken up with getting over some of the things in my life that I found hard to cope with.

I was surprised at how

some (people) felt

that I had been through

a lot of

hard times

in my life

as I did not feel

that I had experienced anything

beyond the norm.

I have arrived at a different space in my life much more at peace with myself than before…surprised that my journey into the future seemed hopeful.

'I still have a lot to know, understand and feel about myself'.

Research conversation I

Before the first major turn in the road, as we moved along the autobiographical time-line, Tricia and I stopped to explore the meaning of the symbol of a coffin in red outline. This represented Tricia's daddy death when she was eleven years old.

Ruth: Your early memories seem to be very specific ones.

Tricia: It's funny that you should say how I remember specific things, incidents, maybe going to different places or travelling on holiday or away for the day but I can't remember him. I can't remember us talking; touching and feeling, yes, but I think talking to each other is what I missed out on.

Ruth: Can you remember anything he ever said to you?

Tricia: I don't think so and I suppose if I look in terms of whenever daddy died – you know I wonder how much I really missed him. There are lots of effects of not having a father any more in the house, and a mother who had worked at home all her life and now having to start work because of finances. Then the whole thing of identity, of being without a father and where I was without a father in this world of mummies and daddies.

Ruth: Where were you?

Tricia: I think I definitely felt unprotected, that in a very silly but a very traditional sense that I had no father to look after his daughter any more – and that sounds to me 'oh my god, that is absurd!'

Ruth: But very real….

Tricia: It's amazing now the things you take on board, how silly and stupid they are but so powerful. There was the words of a song which hit me once back then and they have stayed with me for years. I am just laughing now, it is so ridiculous…...

Ruth: It sounds like it is more than ridiculous, like it was something quite deep.

Tricia: Yes, it hurt so it did…it's so embarrassing…

Ruth: Can you recall them, can you tell me?

Tricia: Mmnn…not sure…nothing to do with death, you know...well… *'If her daddy's rich, take her out for a meal. If her daddy's poor, then do what you feel.'*(singing quietly)…I remember thinking, 'god, I have no-one to look after me anymore.' It's this whole thing about being a girl and not having a sort of father figure there to look after you, to protect you. I think that left me vulnerable to all future relationships and all things like that. I think that is maybe why I have had so many barriers and boundaries in being overly protective of myself.

Ruth: Your daddy was neither rich, nor poor, he just wasn't there any more…

Tricia: Yeah, my bubble had burst. Up until then I felt safe but when he died, the world wasn't safe anymore and people could take advantage of you. Yes, and that is probably why I am in teaching….and why I feel so strongly about the ways things can

happen…famine, disease, genocide, rape, Third world countries…that's where I still am today – I could start crying now if I started thinking about some of the things that go on.

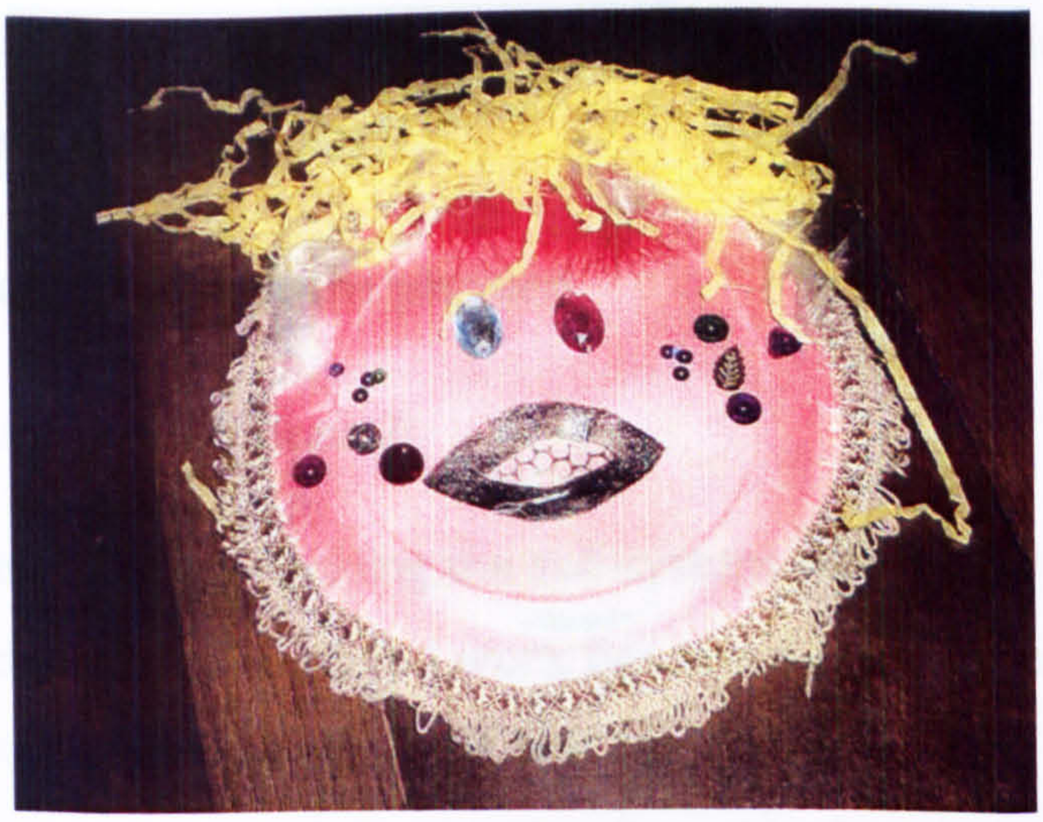
Commentary on Tricia's time-line

School and teaching being a safe haven which afforded opportunities for personal development was a key theme in Tricia's narrative of teacher identity. From her time-line and later self-box, she revealed how much of her life was constructed around protecting feelings of early vulnerability and loss. Much of her wider moral concern was also related to these personal themes. However, in spite of the protective powers imputed to teaching as a career, Tricia also recalled a deep and still painful scar, a critically defining moment early on in her teaching career - being offered her first teaching job, on the basis of being a prize-winning graduate, but to a post outside her discipline. Teaching this subject, Tricia subsequently found was very difficult and she was summarily dismissed after a few months teaching - over the phone by the same principal (priest) who had appointed her; a phone call in which he blamed her and deeply shamed her (threatening to publicly humiliate her) on her apparent lack of ability. She was unable to express her anger then, and even now, and this was one of the themes that emerged from Tricia's mask work.

6.5.ii Tricia: Masks and personae

Tricia: Journal reflections 1:

At the first glance at my mask I realized that it was quite a positive one, with a brightly coloured, pink rosy face, a lace frill around the outside and jewels representing my eyes. It is a very attractive mask, sparkling and extrovert. The only threatening thing represented is how the mouth is covered in a steel material, representing my directness and sometimes strong words where I get to the point too quickly for people. 'How easy is the mask to broach?' is a question that I have to spend time on. Not being accepted, or liked - or even rejected - is something that I find hard to accept. Is this the reason for my brightly coloured sparkly mask?



Tricia mask

In the session afterwards reflecting and wearing our masks, I was asked if I had anything else on the other side of the mask which I had not included. I replied that I did not think that I had things which I tried to hide but realized at this point that I had not included other feelings such as frustration, anxiety, anger and disillusionment that I sometimes feel. What I also realized was that these feelings were as much a reflection of my professional as well as my personal life - given I felt at an early stage of my career that I could not be a different person in these two environments. I had made a decision.

Commentary on Tricia's mask

A significant amount of our research conversation centred on Tricia's 'steel mouth', which led on to how she has developed and strengthened the tone of her professional voice to become very deep, almost masculinized. She rarely expressed anger verbally but did so through tone. Her 'steel mouth' she described as *'a compromise to the requirements of teaching in order to preserve other parts of myself'* - a guard against vulnerability to staff and pupils alike. We moved to talk of dress code and how conscious Tricia is of adapting her natural dress code, even now, to ensure that she could in no way attract boys' attention, in a single-sex, boys' school. Too often, she observed *'pretty teachers or, those with small voices, getting eaten.'* The mask seemed to confront Tricia with some paradoxical feelings that she held about herself. On the one hand, her words and her tone of voice were uncompromising and yet, on the other, there was a sense of her trying to offset this 'steeliness' by her appealing face. She reflected that in order to undertake the role of

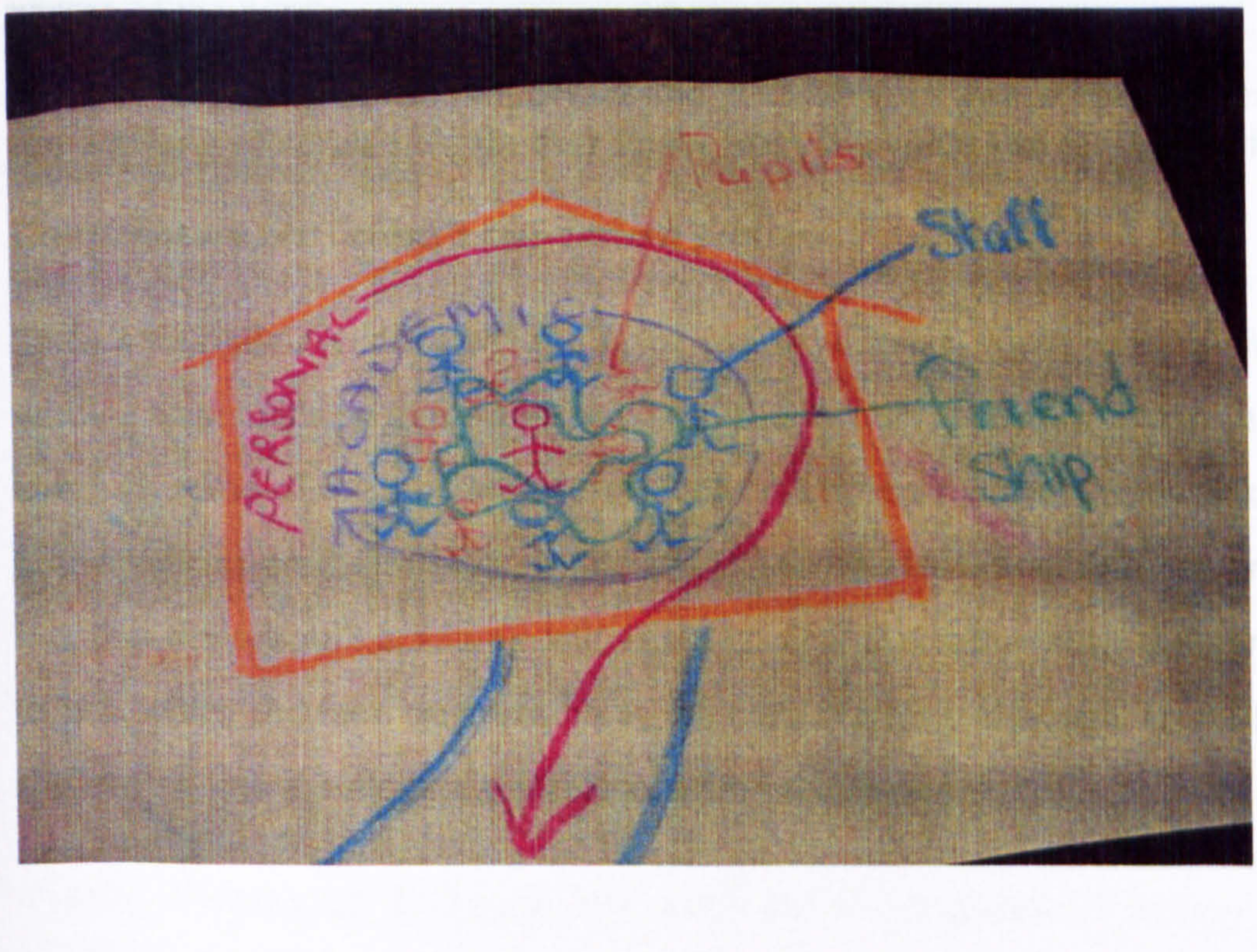
teaching as she experienced it, sexuality and femininity had to be compromised and kept in check, *'under wraps'*.

6.5.iii Tricia: Self-system picture

Tricia: Journal reflections 2:

My initial feeling when tackling the self-system picture led me to draw the shape of a house, as the school in which I work has mostly been a safe haven for me. I think my choice of materials may also have had some effect on the drawing. Using coloured charcoal enabled me to draw the simplistic, idealistic, brightly coloured ideas that I have about school. But perhaps on reflection, I was not ready to enter into any deeper feelings about how I felt about the organization. I illustrated how students and staff work together in school with myself at the centre of this group (in red).

Tricia's self-system picture



Surrounding this group was the tightly fitting academic values of the school, with the school's aim towards personal development being at some distance towards the boundary. On reflection, I did not want at that point to acknowledge the effect of my role changing in school and that I did not feel as I had done previously. I no longer feel safe, having other teachers react differently to me because of my recent

promotion. Perhaps not feeling safe anymore in the centre of the picture, it might have been more realistic to move myself outwards – not to the outside - but further out of the circle than before.

On reflection, the self-system leant towards more surface feelings rather than those which I truly felt deeper down. I think at this stage I am not ready to delve any further.

Research Conversation 2:

Tricia: At an early stage I didn't want to be a teacher because my cousins are all teachers…and here am I at the centre in the picture....it was just this Catholic family thing, the women are all teachers, oh my god! I wanted to be different and wanted to be me and different. But even though I did conform to the family thing, I knew I was going to do it on my own terms and seek different things out for me. I wasn't going into it because you got out of school at 3.30 and home to your five children. That sounds dreadful – that it was a cosy number!'

Ruth: This wasn't for you: not what you wanted …and yet, you're right in the centre of the pupils…

Tricia: Yeah, they're very important and yet I am very aware of never letting them see anything vulnerable. Again they know from the voice - so far and no further.

Commentary on Teresa's self-system picture

Tricia's journal reflections written prior to the research conversations show her wishing to preserve a more idealistic than reality perspective on her role in teaching, although some of the tensions are evident. What became more apparent through conversations on the self-system picture is Teresa's dissatisfaction not only with the fact that the school's academic values are too central rather than the personal values, which she feels ought to be at the core but also, although Tricia, herself is at the centre, she is suffocating and looking for a way out.

6.5.iv Tricia: Self-box

Research Conversation 3:

Tricia: I found the process of making the box frustrating. I had done this type of thing before and I hadn't expected to feel anything new. I found it hard to engage with and knew there should be something at the centre but didn't know what until you suggested clay. Then I formed the seal.

Ruth: Clay is good for working out feelings like frustration…and the seal..?

Tricia: In a way it created itself. I had watched a natural history programme during the week which had shown the way in which killer whales would launch an attack in the shallow waters where baby seals were playing.

Ruth: A wee seal playing at the edge of the waves completely unawares and a big predator coming in and devouring it.

Tricia: The seals on the beach - it's that sense of vulnerability. I wonder have I lived in the fear of it.

Ruth: No protection.

Tricia: Yeah……I think teaching is the sort of thing… and also like parts of me could say I ended up in this job just by chance but then there are other things as well. It allows possibilities if you want to be in an environment to facilitate growth for yourself.

Baby seal at the centre of Tricia's box.

Commentary on the self-box

After the third research conversation with Tricia, I noted the following in my journal:

'*This was perhaps the most deeply moving and reflective session. I got the strongest sense of getting an understanding beyond the competent professional. The inner box was undoubtedly central in this and the seal was the key symbol. We talked over the process of image-making itself as symbolically meaningful. The box is covered in red shiny, textured foil paper – it had to be 'reflective', T said. 'The rawness had to be covered' and she did this until she realized that she could not get into the inside of the box at all, and she had to start over again. All the edges had to be finished neatly in braid (as the mask had to be also along its outer edge). T talked of her struggle with the inside of the box. Her head says that there should be no difference between the inside and the outside – a desire to be transparent or at least have the inside reflected on the outside. Yet, there is no real hint on the outside as to what is on the inside once the lid is closed – except for perhaps one white feather protruding, upsetting the symmetry of the neatly braided box It took us a long time to enter the box.'*

Research conversation 4

Having talked about how she had made 'deep decisions' (although she wasn't aware of them at the time) when her father was dying - to grow up and put away childish

things, to protect herself, Tricia took the seal out of its nest of feathers and was holding it in her hand, stroking its head.

Research conversation

Ruth: How does it feel to stroke it?

Tricia: Poor wee thing!

Ruth: If it had a voice what would it say?

Tricia: 'You just need some tender loving care…some nurturance'.

Ruth: Anything else?

Tricia: 'It's not your fault!' (silence, followed by tears)

Ruth: You look very wistful…(silence)

Tricia (awkwardly): It's so very hard to say this… but this brings up images…. that I would have, like regularly… sometimes when I am falling asleep, of holding a baby in the crook of my arm and nursing it…

'To this point anyway I have got what I needed and I have been able to be fed in some way by it. But….there is a lot that conflicts with where I want to be…If I was going to be very truthful, I would say, 'yes, I have been very successful', if you are measuring success as what I aimed for regarding my career. But what I want really in my life is to meet someone and to have a fulfilling family life.'

Thus, while Tricia feels that there are *'parts of her life where she feels that 'yes, this is where I want to be",* there are others that are not yet in place. In terms of resolving this, Tricia draws on her personal faith and personal world view, which holds that there is a *'Grand Plan'* which unfolds for her but with which she also interacts. At the point where the research conversations came to a close, Tricia was questioning paradoxically whether she should try to interfere less consciously in this 'plan' and 'go with the flow.'

'I was not totally consciously aware of why I was doing some of the things I did but I knew in myself at that moment in time that whatever it was, it was right for me.'

'Not giving up and still hoping and wanting and wishing whatever – but a belief from an early age that if I want these things, if someone has planted these things in my mind or heart for me, that is God who has done that. In some ways I don't know how I am going to get that but that is not really for me to worry about at this stage. I believe 'no more worry.' I have worried enough. No more me trying to control.

> Letting go all that controlling, all that trying to manoeuvre things so that they happen, that things work!'

6.5.v Tricia: Unearthing unconscious

Tricia entered the research process with a conscious, externally-presented narrative of identity, based on demonstrable competency and achievement derived from her successful career development. However, through the creative narrative process, she gradually articulates her inherent subjective narrative which seems to exist 'just below the threshold of awareness', which is much more emotionally layered and raises questions for her about the relationship between her personal and professional narratives and the role of serendipity or faith in the current felt tension:

> 'whereas the inner narrative is a conscious phenomenon, the individual very often holds an unconscious or preconscious sense of her goals and process hidden from her own awareness for complex reasons...but nonetheless evident to the astute observer.'
>
> (Plunkett, 2001: 155)

Although I consider myself to be an astute observer, I am also anxious not to impose interpretations, yet the more emotionally-laden, narrative shift that took place over the research process confirmed my initial sense of incongruity between Tricia's statements of self and her non-verbal demeanour. Unconscious, then, for Tricia appears to be enmeshed in her narrative at a number of levels. Most obviously, it was written into the emotionally-intense early experiences of insecurity deriving from loss ('second' family and death of her father), which expressed themselves through many of the contradictory themes in Tricia's professional autobiography, not least the belief in the transparency and congruence between her personal and professional selves. The theme of vulnerability (and loneliness) was also in contradiction to her hugely strong sense of collective family identity, which had largely remained unacknowledged until the creative time-line. Unconscious was also more immediately embodied in Tricia's voice which acted as her main form of professional (and indeed personal) defence and her attempt to sublimate any vestiges of femininity in the classroom. Her revelation of her quest for personal fulfilment through relationship and hoped-for family raised deep questions for her about the compromises made (often unawarely) on behalf of her professional role over the years at the expense of her personal desires. At the heart of her self-box, Tricia

symbolised her complex views on personal agency and predetermination and a core emotional issue the history of which was evident and whose power was still present.

CHAPTER 7: SHADOWLANDS: REFLECTING ON THE CREATIVE NARRATIVES

This final chapter will reflect on and summarize a number of dimensions of the inquiry to bring some closure as my '*Journey into paradox…*' comes to an ending.

Unsurprisingly, given my own story, I set myself a tall order in trying to inquire into narrative and unconscious in teachers' identity and I feel some unease as I move to this stage of bringing some intellectual and personal closure to the research texts of these creative narratives by Fionnuala, Kathy, Daisy and Tricia – and of course, myself. I deliberately did not entitle this chapter 'Conclusions' as I am loathe to over-interpret, over-theorize or categorize these complex, creative narratives in any reductionist sense. For me, the power of the stories resides in the rich texture and layering of images and meanings the participants themselves attribute to their work. Like life, I have to bear in mind that there is much left unsaid and also, these narratives are continually unfolding and should not be sharply foreclosed. (Even today, Fionnuala 'phoned, talking of how she feels she has *'moved leaps and bounds'* and that the *'process of confronting the challenges and potentials is not ever likely to end!'*). However, I did set out on my journey, declaring that I wished to develop a meta-narrative or 're-telling' of unconscious to counteract what I see as the dominant socio-cultural discourse that gives precedence to language as the underlying structure of identity. I am therefore challenged to foreground some of the pervasive issues and continuing paradoxes that the inquiry has invoked, in terms of (i) the narrative outcomes in teacher identity and (ii) the creative narrative process itself.

7.1 Catching shadows on the landscape: unconscious in creative narratives.

I guess I will ricochet in this section between, on the one hand, sounding authoritative and, on the other, holding too timid a voice in not wanting to pronounce findings on the elusive, ineffable unconscious. I am very aware that I mined many research literature mountains in trying to make some sense of 'unconscious', outside strictly psychodynamic interpretations. Even my voracious

love of theory was glutted at times but since I could never truly find a 'clearing', I opted, against all my academic conditioning at the outset, not to 'operationally define' that which, of course, eludes definition. The best container I could permit for unconscious on the narrative journey was what may appear to have been a 'tatty, patchwork haversack' in which unconscious might unpack as some amalgam of cognitive unconscious in the forms of 'previously unthought', 'unknown', 'tacit knowings', 'below awareness understandings', 'forgotten', 'half-forgotten memories' of images, thoughts, experiences and the psychodynamic unconscious in terms of such expressions as emotional avoidance, repression and defence mechanisms etc..

As I try to summarize how the participants storied 'unconscious' in their images and narratives, I am aware of crossing an ideological value-boundary by talking of patterns across the narratives ('the teachers') rather than respecting the individual voices of Fionnuala, Kathy, Daisy and Tricia. I justify this to myself in terms of meeting the academy's expectations but I also genuinely feel that there are some interesting cross-stories. Being sensitive to this contrivance, I see two immediate ways in which unconscious was storied on this landscape.

Firstly, all four participants viewed the images and, perhaps more importantly, the creative process itself as carrying unknown, unconscious dimensions. Through the art-making and the final pieces themselves, they communicated to me that aspects of their biographies were being displayed without their conscious awareness. The research conversations and subsequent reflexivity by means of journaling allowed them to make meaning (or not) of what was being represented to them, through them by means of the art, as it were. All four participants expressed the view that, due to the presence of their images and symbolization, there was more inherent potential for storying their identities in the research process than they might ordinarily have expected through an interview processes. This is perhaps most explicitly captured in Kathy's comment in her most recent email to me (Appendix 3):

> 'I can truly say that it (art) raised issues which would not otherwise have been talked about in interview alone. I could not deny what was clearly depicted in front of me and I was the only one who could explain what was drawn.'

Secondly, each of the four participants held various models of unconscious which were embedded in their spoken narratives. Through the transcripts of the research

conversations, it was evident that each participant held store by their capacities for self-reflection and insight into their own identity and their ability to influence this process, albeit that the degree of agency attributed to self varied from participant to participant. Equally, in their language of identity, it was apparent in how they explained themselves to themselves, that some variation on a psychodynamic model of unconscious was operative. Variously, they viewed early experiences as being formative and their capacities to avoid, ignore, forget or repress negative emotional experiences as equally influential in their autobiographies of identity. Fionnuala talked spontaneously of 'repression' and graphically depicted this in her images of wishing to get back into the box and close the lid; Daisy in projecting images and feeling exposed when her mask was not in place; Kathy in how 'busyness' helped her avoid painful issues and Tricia's sense of a part of her being 'frozen' from her father's death.

Unconscious was revealed through the narratives in a variety of forms. The differing creative tasks seemed to encourage quite differing types of reflexivity and therefore revealed a variety of structures within the participants' narratives of identity. Thus, creative autobiographical time-lines elicited a type of retrospective identity search, not a passive re-telling but one leading to the expression of a prospective identity. Mask-work tended to lead to reflexive stories of 'inner' and 'outer' disjunctures in personal and professional experience; self-system pictures were inclined to compress lived-experience into 'frozen moments' of complex, existential professional experience; and finally self-box construction seemed to permit the expression of multi-layered facets of self-experience which were organized in relation to or against some concept of 'core' or inner aspect of self, in which critical emotional incidents or epiphanies were considered as being formative. Despite the fact that I recognize that in using only four creative narratives, there is a risk in over-interpreting or drawing too many inferences concerning the value of arts-based methods in encapsulating more deeply layered narratives along the continuum of consciousness-unconsciousness, I still feel drawn to summarize what I view each of the creative methods to have offered in terms of the narrative aims of the study:

Autobiographical time-lines

Some of the critical incidents or nuclear episodes symbolized on the autobiographical time-line were already well-storied by the participants but, in each case, new or unexpected themes emerged from stopping at the symbolic expressions, along their lines. Whether through confronting the meaning of the symbolization or, together with the process of research conversations, emotions relating to these were not so much cognitively re-visited, more re-experienced and, in some cases, the significance of the events was re-evaluated (Fionnuala's grand-father's death, Kathy's moves; Daisy's missing years; Tricia's father's death are all cases in point). My view is that the stimulus was the confrontation with the symbol but also that the fuller, richer emotional descriptions, which ensued were facilitated by the act of my witnessing and the support available through the research conversations. Thus, art-based symbols seemed to provide access to pre-conscious or unconscious layers of past experience, which were scaffolded through language in the research relationship and were leading to what I would describe as 'quest' narratives, which I will discuss later.

There was also something interesting about how each of the participants construed their lives through time in the presentation of the autobiography by means of a creative time-line. There is much debate in the literature about how time is structured and configured by us (Carr, 1986). In this inquiry, I would argue that the artistic representation and metaphors (rivers, sine-waves, roads) gave some forms to the flux and helped not only with the narrative of unconscious but generally with the narrative structuring of experience, since experience simply *'goes on'* in time and is ostensibly formless (Freeman, 1998). In contrast to Freeman (op cit.), who argues that time is viewed fundamentally in linear terms, the creative depiction of time and of the symbolization of significant emotional events suggested that Fionnuala, Kathy, Daisy and Tricia held a much more dynamic picture of autobiographical time allowing the potential for change to be in-built (Bateson1972, 1979; White & Epston 1990).

Masks and mask-making

> 'Once donned, mask becomes reality'
>
> (Gergen, 1991: 142/43).

Mask-making, masks as objects and mask-wearing demonstrated tremendous potential for participants to narrate their lived experience at the interface of the personal and professional – what Jung (1953:157/58) would have described as the '*compromise between individual and society, as to what a (wo)man (sic) should appear to be'.* Viewing their masks and more importantly playing with and wearing their masks permitted Fionnuala, Kathy and Daisy to reflect on what they have come to present as their persona and what they 'choose' to keep hidden or protected from their professional (and indeed sometimes personal) arenas. What became evident was that none of them recollected real choice-points in terms of their identity-presentation or restriction, although some of these 'unconscious decisions' were linked by them to critical incidents or emotional episodes that were identified on the time-line. Within her narrative of identity, Tricia's relationship with her mask initially suggested a contrasting story to the others; she held that there was no disjuncture between personal and professional, nor any differentiation between 'inner and 'outer.' Hers was a narrative of 'congruence'. Nevertheless, in all cases there were deeply emotional aspects to the story in relation to the faces revealed or concealed. This put me in touch with Cole's (1999) narrative work with people who had facial problems, which told of the essential, deeply embedded role of the face in the perception of self - *'the body-part we feel most embodied in is our face'* (Cole, op cit. 301). Through it, she argued we can reveal or attempt to conceal our emotions and this, too, was evident in the teachers' narratives of identity.

> 'The mind, consciousness, is on the face to be seen.'
>
> (Cole, 1999: 316)

What mask-work also stimulated was the potential for discourse around a wider sense of embodiment that lies in the relationship not just of faces presented to the outside world but also the impact of the social on the body. This led to conversations about participants' felt sense as females and the concessions they made within their professional roles. Brief narratives of embodied identities emerged in all four cases from the mask-work – for Fionnuala, tension over being colourless and feeling physically constrained in her movement in teaching science; for Kathy, physical, bodily reactions to unexpressed emotions; for Daisy, her diminutive sense of self and sexuality; and for Tricia's how she had cultivated unawarely and projected a voice as a mask and protection against vulnerability in schooling. The mask in three

of the four narratives, with the exception being Tricia, was one of 'secondary reality'; what was primary was the inner, emotional sense behind the image. Britzman (1995) calls for teachers to look at issues of constructed sexuality and I feel that, on the basis of this limited exploration, mask-work offers a strategic entry point for investigating the significance of sexuality in teaching.

Thus, I am left with the view that considerable work remains to be done on further explicating the female teacher's relationship to her body, how clothes are used (Flugel, 1966), its restricted expression in teaching and the impact of the collective gender message on their physical identity. However, I am not sure that I observed within these personae narratives that we are yet at identity 'saturation point' in the Gergen (2000) sense nor are we 'empty selves' in Cushman's (1995) extreme terms, but we are often chameleon-like:

> 'Once saturated…the remedy for the multiphrenic self lies in chameleon-like adaptations to the fragmentary cultural circumstances around her'
>
> (Piper, 1997: 56).

Self-system pictures

Bollas (1987) talks of '*the unthought known*' as that which one is aware of in one's pre-reflective and pre-verbal consciousness, but have not yet thought. According to Hawkins (1997) the unthought known cannot be verbalized but can be communicated through projective means. I consider that the self-system pictures illustrate that such art-based means hold the power to access and present the personal unthought known to conscious awareness. Each self-system picture seemed to crystallize immediate existential issues for these teachers in their current professional roles. In Fionnuala's picture, it was her desire for fuller expression as a teacher and the restrictions imposed by the science syllabus and science lab. For Kathy, her picture confronted her with the unreasonable pressure and demand that she (and her job) were placing upon her. In Daisy's picture, the red telephone symbolized her angry frustration in her role but also stimulated her personal theme of 'being prevented' from getting close to pupils. Finally, Tricia's self-system image brought to the surface much deeper contradictions and confusions in her life experience than the one initially indicated in her surface reading of her picture. For all four teachers, the seemingly unbidden images seemed to provide them with

'stopping-points', at which they could view their current professional contexts and experience within the broader context of their life stories both lived and yet to be lived.

From the written and spoken discourse attached to their self-system pictures, it appears that any unconscious dimensions stimulated by the images are largely viewed by the participants as residing within them as individuals rather than as being located within the organizational cultures of their institutions. I would also argue that these simple drawn images stimulated deeply personal issues, questions and quests, some of which they may have been dimly, rather than centrally aware of beforehand, in relation to the meaning and future direction of their lives. They could also be explored as one of the experiential methodologies *'for enabling the hidden culture (of organizations) to be partially uncovered' as* advocated by Hawkins (1997: 438).

Self-boxes

The creation of self-boxes, a visual three-dimensional representation of the self, led to many creative representations of identity and how to interpret it. I acknowledge that the requirement to employ a box as the template for the self is already providing a practical and metaphorical restriction on 'self', but then language also constrains. Within the restrictions imposed by this creative task, each participant, even Tricia with her frustration at the process, found valuable amplifications to their stories. What was contained within the box was in all instances most personal and most detailed. On the sides of the box, both Fionnuala and Daisy represented multiple aspects of self, for Kathy it was important that the outside was 'ordered' and for Tricia 'reflective'. Clearly there was a resonance between personal themes arising from the mask and those stimulated by the self-box, although the detail and potential breadth of the narratives arising from the self-boxes was augmented as a result of the holism and dimensionality of the self-box. Fionnuala, Daisy and Tricia in particular became conscious of what might be described as central emotional themes or 'sacred meanings' (Freeman, 1998: 45) through the 'personification' of tensions in their subjective experience that they saw displayed in the symbolization of their self-box. In Fionnuala's story, the chaos and vibrancy of the inner world was felt in sharp contrast to the inhibiting, if loving, family threesome of snowmen on the outside; Daisy could talk of the pain of compartmentalization; and Tricia got in touch with

her sense of early loss and was able to articulate her heart's yearning. While these might be described more properly as 'therapeutic narratives', or 'limitation-remediation scripts' (Tomkins, 1987), given the way in which participants explored alternative scripts; however, they also spoke of ordinary people, teachers having an opportunity to project externally their current, inarticulate concerns of self, in a form more apposite than words. The stories, through the research conversations and journaling came later, and perhaps that is the best order, since:

> 'Stories distort by imposing false unity: rid ourselves of stories and we get that much closer to the real and the true: the naked stuff, the demythologized brute data.'
>
> (Freeman, 1998: 30)

Kathy's box initiated a slightly differing process in which the inner box unfolded (literally and metaphorically), less as harbouring a 'core motif' and more as being a 'memorial container' (after Kotre, 1995). Here we engaged in the creating of meaning of Kathy's self through the touch of specifics, important ordinary objects (lace-in-the-making, cards, old school ties, photographs, a smock dress, child's reins, a baby shoe etc.), all of which held significant personal memories, often with deeply embedded emotions. As Kotre says, such interaction allows us to:

> 'touch old objects, smell old aromas; hear old sounds…to recapture the experience of childhood. As you will experience your memories more deeply if they are embodied in gesture and movement.'
>
> (Kotre: 1995: 17).

This is what happened in Kathy's story of her self box and led to visceral thick descriptions replete with many unintended discoveries, too many to capture in this study. However, I was struck by the inherent value even a single photograph has potentially in helping to uncover layers of meaning and for going deeper into our ongoing constructions of ourselves.

There were many references to differing sides, differing facets, differing voices, fragmented aspects and sometimes oppositional selves in the conversations about the self-boxes. Instinctively, on occasion, I encouraged some participants to explore giving these aspects or objects a 'voice', as one might in Gestalt-type therapy. It was a stretch across 'normal research-type interaction' but within the confines of trust, competence and contract that existed, this felt appropriate in the moment and, in terms of extending our understanding the complexity of what may be termed 'inner

experience'. In Tricia's case, the image and voice of the 'baby seal' at the centre of her self-box uncovered an internal, condensed narrative of present-day wistfulness and loneliness interleaved with an early story of loss and lack of protection. The discovery of its story was a moment of 'sacred integrity'- what Freeman (1998) describes as *'a kind of intuition or intimation that human life has a great deal more potential meaning, significance, and value than it often feels like it has'* (p45). Through the seal image, this revelation permitted Tricia to articulate and explore the tensions and contradictions she was in effect feeling as her professional career developed and her desires for personal fulfilment stood still.

While there were also many references to a sense of 'core self', arising from the self-box narratives, and this was often symbolized by 'something at the centre', such as Tricia's seal, and Daisy's intersection (and in my case a lotus flower 'in absentia'), this was a dimension of the inquiry which really needed much further exploration. Narratives of 'core self' often linked to spirituality and occasionally a religious sense, although I was fascinated by Daisy's protest that, of course, she had a core self, otherwise she would not have survived and that trauma was paradoxically part of this 'core.' Somewhere I guess this resonated with my own story.

> 'The self exists as a process in a constant state of transformation and flux: it is the dialogue between the facets.'
>
> (Ronai, 1992: 107)

Methodologically, this study has opened up numerous potential avenues for further exploration. Indeed the depth and range of possible stories arising from the current creative narratives of identity is far from plumbed but I am aware, however that I must come to a close, given the word-constraints imposed by this exercise. Before I do, I think it is important to précis some particular themes in teacher identity that are emerging from this inquiry which are less overt in contemporary research literature in this area.

7.2 Illuminating shadows - unconscious in teacher identity

Although it is not immediately easy to illuminate how unconscious operates in teachers' lives, on the basis of the creative narratives for these four female teachers, it is apparent that there are many aspects to being a teacher than are not

immediately visible. Recent literature (Sachs, 2000; 2001) focuses on the definitional power of external discourses and economic, political and policy contexts on professional identity, and the importance of the collective stories over individual stories *'for ongoing action.'* (Sachs, 200: 155). While there is undoubtedly value in this level of analysis, what this inquiry suggests is that to understand fully teachers' relationships with their practice, there needs to be a deeper knowledge concerning teachers' own understanding of their experience at the centre of research and policy agendas (in line with Casey, 1992).

In this inquiry, while there is evidence of a dynamic relationship between personal and professional identity, with the line between these 'identity performances' being constantly negotiated, conversations focusing on personal identity far outweighed those on professional identity. Professional identity issues were largely subservient to personal issues and it tended to be myself as the researcher who brought a focus back to the professional arena. Now, I accept that this may be challenged as being a particular study of a particular group of female teachers at a particular time with a particular researcher. Nevertheless, in the same way that Larson, (1997) illuminates how particular processes (and assumptions) inhibited her narrative account as a 'subject', so, I would argue, do many of the methods currently being used to capture teacher stories. Using creative narrative, by dint of symbolization, gets beyond the descriptive and analytical to explore what Keltchermans calls the *'deeper layers of meaning'* (quoted in Nias, 1996: 295).These teachers, three in mid-career and one in the later career cycle (Fessler & Christensen, 1992), are all successful, self-motivated and committed teachers by any external standards (promotions, exam success rates, higher degrees) and yet three of them (Fionnuala, Daisy and Tricia) uncovered a personal 'quest narrative' which was challenging their future direction as professionals.

In addition, there are specific themes that emerge from the participants' stories of unconscious which remain to be debated more fully in the future. These are, for example, the way in which formerly undisclosed aspects of lived experience, particularly emotionally charged experiences, when symbolized in awareness, are storied as affecting not only professional classroom behaviours (Daisy's fear of getting emotionally involved) but also the moral purposes of teaching (Kathy's

championing of children's voices) and in some cases the desire to reconsider teaching as a career (Fionnuala's sabbatical). As Weber and Mitchell (1997) have found in their image-work, there is often an underlying unease, ambivalence or confusion about how teachers really feel about their professional identity (p145). In addition, this study suggests the value of exploring further the multiple 'I's' of teacher identity, since like Cooper and Olson (1996), I would argue that a fundamental concern in teacher identity lies in the tension teachers experience between their personal knowledge of children, which includes their own childhood histories and memories, and the 'objective' model characteristics and expectations that abound.

7.3 Casting future shadows: creative narrative in narrative inquiry

The study has truly been a heuristic exploration in that there was no pre-formed research design; it documents a personal and professional process of trying to come to some sort of understanding, through an appropriate methodology, on the nature of a variety of paradoxes presented by experience and research literature in the areas of self, identity, narrative and unconscious.

Firstly in general terms, there was a huge amount of learning in the study for everyone closely involved. One of the most valuable aspects of learning for me was the quality of the relationship developed with each of the participants and the ways in which we negotiated and continue to negotiate the complexities of research in the context of 'real life.' The creative narratives tell of ways in which the four participants benefited indirectly (and unexpectedly in cases) from the research process. I am left, however with a concern for the cautions that must be borne in mind when engaging in narrative inquiry in depth. I have four testimonies to enriched experience as a result of the research experience from these willing participants, but one cannot always guarantee that there is not potential for errors of judgement by both potential subjects and researchers as the lines between qualitative research and arts with their capacity to access to the unknown become closer. Narrative inquirers who move in this direction, need to be sufficiently trained and ethically cautious in their negotiations, interaction and actions. In this inquiry, while I became concerned about the impact of my multiple roles in relation

to the participants and the inherent power differential, I consider that the following extract from my 'closure conversation' with Kathy tells something of the quality of our relationship and the influence the research process had on her:

Ruth: My guess is also that our relationship has changed since we started this.
Kathy: Well I feel I know you better as a person.
Ruth: And yet, I have disclosed relatively little in a sense.
Kathy: Yes but there seems to be an intuitive understanding about where it is that I am and it is only people who have that sense that mean more to me. I did get so much out of it all, which I feel was another milestone. I mean this is the first thing that has made sense of those two bits that were obviously there.
Ruth: The two bits being?
Kathy: Well the zig-zag line across and the other one (referring to her autobiographical time-line).
Ruth: So this is the first time that this past experience has been given time and discussion which has made it make sense?
Kathy: But it was seeing it in the picture too! I don't have to carry this (confusion) any more and it is great. I have carried it for far too long. I really should have known but I suppose I didn't know what I didn't know. It has enabled me to take ownership of some of that back there as having had an effect on who I am and that not everything was X's (husband) fault.

> 'Our capacity to move forward as developing beings rests on a healthy relation to the past...we carry our wounds and perhaps even worse our capacity to wound, forward with us.'
>
> (Hampl, 1996: 209).

In any conclusion, I am wary of coming across as simply confirming my presuppositions at the end of this work but the study has sharpened my view that narrative research, in the main, privileges consciously narrated experience and pays only lip-service to unconscious dimensions, which may be latent but powerful in directing action and meaning in life story. This appears to be due to a misapprehension about the substrate for thought and speech in which the social order takes effect (see Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987 ; Kövecses, 2000 for further development). Because of the current unpopularity of any internalist perspective, there has been a detachment from the authority of the body (Van der Kolk, 1994) and the centrality within the body of sensation, perception, movement and feeling upon which society and culture impact, and upon which language consequently can

be built. This is an area ripe for further intellectual and empirical exploration through creative narrative and other arts-based approaches to research.

Across the four creative narratives, I consider that there is some emerging evidence for the notion of an embodied sense of self in identity and self-consciousness to be taken seriously. Language alone is insufficient to capture life story and meaning, especially of the embodied kind; visual creative art forms provide additional symbolic dimensions to the meaning of lived experience. However, the paradox remains that there is strict interdependence between self-conscious thought and linguistic self-reference (Bermúdez, 1998), which is difficult to disentangle, and is certainly beyond the bounds of this study.

> 'There are others, popular today, which do allow for a social context but deny a bodily one...such that behaviour can only have social causes, not biological ones, so that the constitution of people's bodies can have no effect on their personality.'
>
> (Midgley, 1998: 166)

Using creative narrative methods, I argue, facilitates levels of meanings being symbolized and interpreted which are often unexpected, previously unthought-of, unspoken, unspeakable, latent, tacit and frequently emotionally-laden, leading to narratives of identity, which in this case, are considered by the teacher participants to be different than what they would have articulated if asked simply to 'tell their stories.'

Art, then, is an important mode of self-exploration, and it should be valued for its:

> 'power to cultivate one's own sensibilities, engender empathy towards others...offer catharsis for troubling experiences, celebrate the human spirit ...!'
>
> (Piantanida et al, 2003: 189)

It is worth reflecting briefly on creative narrative as methodology before I finish this present research journey. 'Creative narrative' is the term I derived early on in the process to describe the medley of methodological approaches undertaken in this thesis: a blending of narrative inquiry and arts-based research with self and others. While this dissertation showcases a specific example of arts-based tasks, combined with a particular style of narrative research conversation, there are clearly many

possibilities for synthesis and researcher-style worthy of further research exploration and exposure to scrutiny by the research community. I am not making claims at this juncture (eighth moment!) that combining art with narrative is a move towards some new research paradigm. Rather, I view the appropriate incorporation of art as a timely, wholly practical and intellectually-satisfying means *'for constructing, generating and representing knowledge as well as contributing to the goals of self-understanding and narrative truth.'* (Bochner & Ellis, 2003: 510). I am struck again by reflections from my former mentor, who said that art can assist science to become more sensitive to transformative effects and science can assist art-based research into becoming more systematic (Mc Niff, 1998: 166).

This study, then, represents one exemplar in the riddle of how to legitimate art as a fundamental substrate to narrative inquiry; it was possible to unravel and provide some insights into an intellectual and research puzzle (how to research unconscious) through the use of arts methods within narrative practice. Moreover, I consider that the arts approaches incorporated in this study demonstrate 'added value' to the narrative research experience and in some cases transformative impact for the participants involved – by *'creating a pathway to the unknown by breaking through barriers to new insight'* (Bochner & Ellis, 2003: 512). To date, however, I have located few published examples of research where art is introduced as method 'with' participants in order to facilitate emotional expression and meanings. Currently, it is more likely to find published examples of performance - or autoethnographic-art as research (eg Ylönen, 2003), where there are questions about how such texts provide sufficient information about the self without being accused of self indulgence (Sparkes, 2002: 215). Or, on the other hand, examples of research where therapeutic or diagnostic art is carried out 'on' people and heavily interpreted by the 'expert' or clinical researcher (eg Fenton, 2000).

Clearly there are those of us researchers beginning to cross (or, transgress, as 'responsible anarchists' do) the boundaries of research orthodoxy even within the qualitative paradigm, by arguing for the inclusion of art, in its myriad forms, as crucial to a more vibrant and truthful representation and expression of human experience. However, intellectual argument and rationale alone for these 'border crossings' are insufficient: establishing the integrity of the arts as research (or within established

research modes) requires careful exploration and showcasing of art as research (both as stimulus and data) with careful thought about the location and purpose of the revelation of self in such texts.

Until now arts-based research approaches have primarily employed literary forms (Barone & Eisner, 1997) and this now requires to be extended to include other forms of non-linguistic arts in ways that are ethical and meaningful according to the various purposes of qualitative research. Our challenge is to hold up to the critique of mainstream qualitative research convincing demonstrations of arts-based research which provide insight and answers to epistemological, policy and practice questions that could not have easily been provided otherwise. This is the contribution of arts-based research within the qualitative paradigm and this dissertation is my exploration of and justification for the potential and rationale for such a fusion.

EPILOGUE

> 'You can think you have gained a voice in the sense of mastery of a discipline and a semblance of authority, and then you can turn around and find that you have also lost a voice, in the sense of being disconnected from yourself.'
>
> (Plath Helle, 1993: 53 referring to student)

At the outset, I said that this inquiry would be a journey rather than a destination and as I arrive at this point I am even surer that this is the case. Undoubtedly, I feel like a rather dusty and weary pilgrim, as I come to rest here, this wet, Friday afternoon in late November. I have heard so many people say that when the time came to finish their doctoral study, they were 'sick to death of the topic'. And yes, while I have agonized over the complexities of the task I set, and the consequences for me, and those around me, of getting engrossed in this dissertation at this stage in my career, while managing a busy university school and a family, I feel if anything more passionate and more engaged by the enterprise.

I said somewhere earlier that I had a sense of 'coming home' as a researcher-scholar and that 'feeling of arrival' has persisted. I consider I have stalked out my niche in this exploration, after roving around uncomfortably in the social science genre for years and feeling dispossessed early on as a counselling researcher. Now, in this narrative landscape, I feel better orientated; I have a comprehensive map of the areas I want now to explore and the methods I wish to use in getting around and am ready to expose creative narrative methods to the scrutiny of educational research communities.

I also have a much stronger sense of my 'voices' coming together, albeit that they are not yet in harmony and indeed may never be. I am aware, as any reader of this text will be, of how one voice has rubbed up against the other in various sections of the text, like flesh against a cheese-grater, but this was all part of the learning process for me, and I am resisting apologizing. I suppose the biggest thing that has happened in this respect is that my personal voice, the one in touch with experience and sensation, no longer feels so bullied by my scholarly-voice. There are spaces in the text where my personal voice wins through to loosen the screws on even the tightest 'meccano-type arguments' being edified. This encourages me enormously

and helps me to feel a lot more 'connected to my self' than I did when I set out on this sojourn just over a year ago.

This year-long journey had many milestones from beginning to end: some of these were clearly focused on the ups and downs and questions over various research events and stages themselves (scheduling research interviews in teachers' busy lives and mine; ongoing deliberations about structure and style: despair when first interviews did not record: 'clarifying' my paradoxes; my 'high' after the away-day of sharing with Kim's other doctoral students; writing within the strictures of word limits; problems over interview transcription; pressure of time and the desire for validity and ethical checks; my nadir three weeks ago when it felt impossible to complete etc.). Other milestones perhaps seem more clearly related to events in my own life and emotional experience (creating my own self-box over a week-end; counselling supervision on aspects of my self-box; the emotional carry-over of the intense interviews with participants; the powerful impact of their images; prophetic dreams; a major bereavement; a long lone week-end in County Donegal with my grief, the sea and my thesis and, of course, writing my autoethnographic account).

On reflection, it is really very difficult for me to disentangle the personal from the research journey - unsurprisingly, all is experienced in retrospect as intermeshed and that is how I think this year has been in the living of it. Writing the dissertation was part of the signature tune in everything I did or thought or felt - rarely in the background, mostly figure and resounding loudly. Perhaps the best way to express this is not through the musical metaphor but within the autoethnographic painting (Scott-Hoy, 2003) below - a montage, that, for me, powerfully and symbolically embodies my composite experience of the research process from the onset of the EdD taught modules through to this completed work. I leave my own autobiographical research line for this thesis to speak for itself for those who choose to read the symbolic language – from bottom-left in clockwise direction.

My Autobiographical Research Line

I am aware, however, of the irony that, up until now, I have used only words to explore the unknown of my own identity – not images. The complex image above only manifested as the most encompassing and apposite representation of the journey as I wrote the above summary. And yes, it says what is unsayable.

Yet, I have created many other images along the path within my research journals, my self box, a self-system picture and montages of photographic images, which paralleled much of the creative work of my research participants. I am therefore left wondering why so few of these images were allowed to find expression in the final text. While there are many practical reasons I can give concerning space and appropriate focus, none of these seem really convincing, given the premium I place on images to make the unknown known:

> 'Everyone is an artist. Each person brings sounds out of silence and coaxes the invisible to become visible.'
>
> (O'Donohue, 1997: 14)

So while I am aware, at the end of this research journey, of a sense of satisfaction at having brought some closure and meaning to my initial paradoxical quest, I am also left with a curiosity at this final paradox - at my portfolio of personal images that remain unused and that my story of unconscious in identity found expression largely in words. The image bank, I must believe, is an investment for the future, to find expression in some creative narrative form elsewhere through stories yet untold on the relationship between the body, image, emotion and language and on how *'behind their (words) bright surface is the dark and the silence'* (O'Donohue, op cit: 14).

Before signing-off, some comment on my own tale embedded within the research story is worthy. It seems a long time now since I completed my autoethnographic account; so much has happened since (some of it extremely painful, as indicated above) and I wonder what of relevance to this inquiry I can now include in this brief post-script. I would like to be able to tell you of how others in my story reacted when I let them read it; how pained I felt when, for ethical reasons, I decided to edit out a conflict story with a colleague; how much stronger I now feel in responding to the dominant 'male voice' of the academy; how I modified the title of the tale on advice that 'you don't bleed when there are sharks about!' (akin to Ellis, 2002); how, even now, when I read it, there are points where I still get caught and tears flow. The story, then, has remained a 'living piece' and reference point for me throughout, although it always felt like it might be the dispensable chapter, once the word-limit was reached. I don't know how I would feel about being an appendix or what this might symbolize but I do know that it is Tricia's, Kathy's, Daisy's and Fionnuala's narratives that seem most centrally important in the final analysis.

In many ways, writing the autoethnography is sufficient to have allowed me to understand some of the underground of my own professional identity, as well as being the well-spring for the growth in confidence around my voice, its relationship to my experience and why I feel as passionate as I do about the personal in the professional – all of which have been so central to this paradoxical journey.

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APPENDIX I

Letter of invitation to participate

Email address

Graduate School of Education

November 2002

Dear (student's name)

Re: Request to participate in research study

As I outlined briefly in class, I am undertaking a small-scale qualitative research study which aims to look at unconscious aspects in teachers' or educators' identities. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in the study which hopes to capture participants' understandings of what has and does influence their identity as a teacher/educator. I believe that some of the art pieces which you have already created, as well as further elements through a creative process and reflection on these can possibly provide insight into the impact on professional identity of various aspect of life not normally included in research.

Although it is hard to be clear at this point, should you agree to participate, I anticipate that my request, would minimally involve two–three additional interviews plus a creative workshop. The interviews would provide us with time to talk about your creative work and what meanings and feelings you attach to these and therefore what sense (or not!) you make of it all.

There is no requirement or expectation that any or all of you would be willing or able to agree to this request and I would hope that you *trust that if it does not suit* then there would be no negative consequences or bad feelings whatsoever on my part. I have really valued our work together on the module and how everyone has participated. I also hope that if you have any concerns about the impact of the study that you would raise these with me either in the group or personally.

If however you are agreeable to this request then I would wish to work out an agreement with you as an individual (and as a small group) that would ensure that confidentiality was assured, your privacy respected and that you felt happy with the process and anything disclosed. Any material subsequently written up would be anonymised and given to you to read beforehand to ensure that you were agreeable to the content and that you regard what I have understood or interpreted as valid and accurate as far as you are concerned.

This is simply an initial request so that I can obtain some indication of interest and/or willingness to participate. Once I receive this I will discuss the finer points with you in more detail. I would therefore ask that you consider this request and return the slip below to me by a week tomorrow. Should you wish to discuss the proposal with me in principle in the meantime, please feel free to contact me by email or by phone.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Leitch

✂✂✂

APPENDIX 2

Letter inviting validation and permission to publish text

Email address

Graduate School of Education

Tel: number

Mob number

November 2003

Dear *Fionnuala (Kathy, Daisy, Tricia)*

Re: Your creative narrative

As I said in my telephone call, I am sending this draft of your creative narrative for your consideration before anything goes to print as I realize that there may be things you would rather were not included. Please find enclosed a finished draft of my narrative of your creative narrative. What I really need from you is (i) your checking for accuracy (ii) your editing out anything that you don't want in.(iv) your agree or importantly disagreement with my interpretation of parts of your creative narrative and finally, (iv) your permission to publish this (or an amended version) in my thesis.

I would of course be really happy to have any additional thoughts you have about how you now view unconscious operating in your life, whether or not we could have got the same story through interview (i.e. how did art make a difference?). And anything else on how the story has evolved, should you wish to share it.

Of course I am under dreadful time pressure (what's new?) and this also puts you under some. I would really appreciate if you would either phone me or email me by the end of next week. I will be working at home except for Tuesday when I will be in the university.

I also feel I have missed out on your and others' stories since the research bit has been completed. It was so intense and I felt so involved (still do). I am now preparing to submit my thesis on *Unconscious in Teacher Identity* to the University of Bristol. I do hope that I have been sensitive to you and your material but if not, please let me know. I would not want to include anything that might offend you now or in the future. So think carefully and let me know.

Thanks a million again for you openness and your wonderful creative narrative enclosed (which of course still needs some pics!!!). I think it is great (that's without the me-bit in it). The text is not edited of course and is in condensed format and may need a few bits added but hopefully nothing that will distort what is there at present.

Hope all is well with you and yours.

Ruth

APPENDIX 3

Sample Email and letter replies

Dear Ruth

Thank you for the draft of my creative narrative and for the opportunity to see it before it goes to print.

You have my permission to publish it in your thesis either in the form you sent or with the attached amendments, according to what you think is best.

I have checked it for accuracy and have suggested some changes, as attached (so that others might be able to make some sense of my ramblings!)

I don't think I have edited out anything crucial to the essence of the narrative

I find you amazingly accurate and perceptive in your interpretation.

I have really appreciated the opportunity of participating in your module and particularly in the further unravelling of my unconscious. I find now that I am much more reflective of life, I have taken greater charge of my own life and I have been able to put a closure on many happenings which had been causing discontent for a long time.

I think it is true to say that had I known of the art component of the module I might have been put off but having experienced it I can truly say that it raised issues which would not otherwise have been talked about in interview alone. I could not deny what was clearly depicted in front of me and I was the only one who could explain what was drawn. But you were the one who put it together and helped me to understand (by those amazingly perceptive questions you ask!!)

Many thanks.

Best wishes for your thesis. I am honoured to have been a part.

K

Abridged letter replies

Dear Ruth

Have read through your drafts. Everything is fine except the introduction to me. Please don't mention the following……..

I've jotted some additional thoughts below….

I'm completely happy with the other stuff going out as long as the above is changed.

Again feel free to get in touch. It's sometimes easier to talk about these things rather than to write. Talk soon.

Love Daisy.

Ruth

Sorry my comments (attached) are so late. Many thanks for the listening ear. It really helped.

Tricia